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**NAVAL  
POSTGRADUATE  
SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE MARINE CORPS INDIVIDUAL  
READY RESERVE SCREENING PROCESS**

by

Sean P. Norton

March 2015

Thesis Advisor:  
Co-Advisor:

William Hatch  
Chad W. Seagren

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## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

*Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188*

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.

<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>	<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> March 2015	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> AN ANALYSIS OF THE MARINE CORPS INDIVIDUAL READY RESERVE SCREENING PROCESS		<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Sean P. Norton		
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A		<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ____ N/A ____.		
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited		<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b> A
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b>		
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The geographic nature of IRR Marines as they transition to civilian life affects their ability to participate making the screening of all IRR personnel extremely difficult. IRR Marines choose their post active-duty locations based on where they want to live, not on the requirements of a particular reserve unit or military installation. This constraint offers purpose to improve the 60 percent show rate at the musters and overall 80 percent participation rate. The research recommends MARFORRES establishes a more detailed tier-system to identify "qualified" Marines versus the unqualified, move toward an electronic mustering option with skills training and enforce participation through separation procedures for those neglecting their duties.		

<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Individual Ready Reserve, Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity, Marine Forces Reserve, Screening Process		<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 95
<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>		
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified
		<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU

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**AN ANALYSIS OF THE MARINE CORPS INDIVIDUAL READY RESERVE  
SCREENING PROCESS**

Sean P. Norton  
Captain, United States Marine Corps  
B.A., American Military University, 2006

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MANAGEMENT**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The geographic nature of IRR Marines as they transition to civilian life affects their ability to participate making the screening of all IRR personnel extremely difficult. IRR Marines choose their post active-duty locations based on where they want to live, not on the requirements of a particular reserve unit or military installation. This constraint offers purpose to improve the 60 percent show rate at the musters and overall 80 percent participation rate. The research recommends MARFORRES establishes a more detailed tier-system to identify “qualified” Marines versus the unqualified, move toward an electronic mustering option with skills training and enforce participation through separation procedures for those neglecting their duties.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
A.	PURPOSE.....	1
B.	BACKGROUND .....	1
C.	COMMAND STRUCTURE.....	2
1.	Ready Reserve .....	3
a.	<i>Selected Reserve .....</i>	5
b.	<i>Individual Ready Reserve .....</i>	7
D.	OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY.....	7
E.	RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	8
1.	Primary Research Questions .....	8
a.	<i>How Can the Marine Corps Optimize the IRR for Program Quality and Cost Effectiveness? .....</i>	8
b.	<i>Does the Current Screening Process Satisfy the Anticipated Readiness Requirements of the Manpower Personnel and Policy and Manpower Management Divisions? .....</i>	8
2.	Secondary Research Questions.....	8
a.	<i>What Variables Cause IRR Marines to be found Qualified or Unqualified for Continued Service? .....</i>	8
b.	<i>What Target Goals will Enable MCIRSA to Obtain an Acceptable Readiness Level? .....</i>	8
F.	SCOPE.....	8
G.	ORGANIZATION .....	9
<b>II.</b>	<b>BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>11</b>
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	11
B.	IRR STRUCTURE.....	12
1.	IRR Organization.....	12
2.	Maintaining the IRR.....	15
a.	<i>Bridging Peacetime and Contingency Operations.....</i>	15
b.	<i>The Transition to Civilian Life.....</i>	15
c.	<i>Retaining Skills and Experience .....</i>	15
d.	<i>Location Spread .....</i>	16
C.	CURRENT SCREENING PROCESS .....	17
1.	Atlanta Mega-Muster Site Visit.....	18
a.	<i>Administration.....</i>	20
b.	<i>Medical .....</i>	20
c.	<i>Prior Service Recruiters and Career Planners (CarPlan)....</i>	21
d.	<i>Marine for Life.....</i>	22
e.	<i>Results.....</i>	22
2.	Readiness Support Program .....	22
a.	<i>Responsibilities.....</i>	23
b.	<i>Screening Capability .....</i>	23

D.	<b>STRENGTHS .....</b>	23
1.	<b>Current Screening Process.....</b>	24
2.	<b>Current Mustering Methods.....</b>	24
3.	<b>Use of IRR Marines .....</b>	25
4.	<b>MCIRSA Tiering System .....</b>	25
a.	<i>Tier One.....</i>	27
b.	<i>Tier Two.....</i>	27
c.	<i>Tier Three.....</i>	27
d.	<i>Tier Four .....</i>	27
E.	<b>WEAKNESSES .....</b>	28
1.	<b>Participation Requirements .....</b>	28
2.	<b>Knowledge and Skill Decay.....</b>	29
F.	<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	30
III.	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	33
A.	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	33
B.	<b>OPERATING UNDER CONSTRAINTS .....</b>	33
1.	<b>Requirements for Screening.....</b>	33
2.	<b>Muster Instructions and Directives.....</b>	35
3.	<b>Participation Guidelines.....</b>	35
4.	<b>Time Limits for Activation Guidance .....</b>	36
5.	<b>Budget Awareness.....</b>	37
C.	<b>RELATED STUDIES .....</b>	38
1.	<b>Screening Methods.....</b>	38
2.	<b>Tiered-System Related Study.....</b>	39
3.	<b>Skill-Decay Studies.....</b>	41
4.	<b>Previous Analysis of IRR.....</b>	44
D.	<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	45
IV.	<b>ANALYSIS .....</b>	47
A.	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	47
B.	<b>THE SCREENING PROCESS.....</b>	47
1.	<b>Setting Goals.....</b>	48
2.	<b>Monitoring Past Performance .....</b>	49
C.	<b>MUSTERING .....</b>	50
1.	<b>Optimizing the Use of Muster Venues .....</b>	50
2.	<b>Military Installations .....</b>	51
3.	<b>Electronic Musters .....</b>	52
4.	<b>Muster Education.....</b>	52
D.	<b>TIME LIMITS .....</b>	53
E.	<b>A TIERED SYSTEM.....</b>	53
1.	<b>The Importance of Tiering.....</b>	54
2.	<b>Tier Coding.....</b>	54
a.	<i>Character One: Tier Level.....</i>	55
b.	<i>Character Two: Medical Screening .....</i>	55
c.	<i>Character Three: VA Benefit Percentage .....</i>	55
d.	<i>Character Four: Screening Type .....</i>	55

<b>F.</b>	<b>PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS .....</b>	<b>56</b>
1.	Maintaining Good Standing.....	56
2.	Unsatisfactory Participation .....	57
3.	Administration School Education on the IRR.....	57
4.	Career Transition Briefs .....	59
5.	Consolidating Information.....	59
<b>G.</b>	<b>SKILL DECAY .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>H.</b>	<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>63</b>
A.	SUMMARY .....	63
B.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	64
C.	FUTURE RESEARCH.....	68
	<b>LIST OF REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>71</b>
	<b>INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....</b>	<b>75</b>

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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Components of the Marine Corps Reserves.....	3
Figure 2.	Total Force Marine Corps Reserves .....	4
Figure 3.	FY 2014 Ready Reserve Force .....	5
Figure 4.	Number of Years in the IRR .....	13
Figure 5.	Available Officers by MOS .....	14
Figure 6.	Available Enlisted Personnel by MOS .....	14
Figure 7.	IRR Population by State of Residence, September 2014.....	17
Figure 8.	Planned Mega and Regional Musters for FY15.....	18

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## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1.	Statistics for Marines Screened During the Atlanta Mega-Muster .....	19
Table 2.	Reasons for Absence from Atlanta Mega-Muster .....	19

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AC	active component
ADT	active duty training
AR	active reserve
ASL	active-status list
AT	annual training
AVF	all-volunteer force
CBO	Congressional Budget Office
CONUS	continental United States
CRS	common readiness standards
CSP	command screening program
CY	calendar year
DMDC	Defense Manpower Data Center
DOD	Department of Defense
DODD	Department of Defense Directive
DODI	Department of Defense Instruction
DON	Department of the Navy
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FHG	Force Headquarters Group
FMCR	Fleet Marine Corps Reserves
FY	fiscal year
HQ	headquarters
HQMC	Headquarters Marine Corps
IA	Individual Augmentee
IADT	inactive duty training
IMA	Individual Mobilization Augmentee
IRR	Individual Ready Reserve
ISL	inactive-status list
M4L	Marine for Life
MAGTF	Marine Air Ground Task Force
MARDIV	Marine Division
MARFORRES	Marine Force Reserves
MAW	Marine Air Wing
MCBUL	Marine Corps bulletin
MCCSSS	Marine Corps Combat Service Support School
MCIRSA	Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity
MCO	Marine Corps Order

MCRAMM	<i>Marine Corps Reserve Administrative Management Manual</i>
MCRC	Marine Corps Recruiting Command
MCRD	Marine Corps recruiting districts
MCTFS	Marine Corps total-force system
MLG	Marine Logistics Group
MM	Manpower Management Division
MOBCOM	Mobilization Command
MOS	military occupational specialty
MP	Manpower Personnel and Policy Division
M&RA	Manpower and Reserve Affairs
MSO	military service obligation
ODSE	Operational Data Store Enterprise
PSR	prior-service recruiter
RA	reserve affairs
RAM	Reserve Affairs Personnel Manpower Branch
RC	reserve component
RS	recruiting station
RIM	Reserve Individual Manpower
RSP	Readiness Support Program
RUC	reporting unit code
SELRES	selected reserves
SMCR	Selected Marine Corps Reserves
SME	subject-matter expert
TTC	type transaction code
UDMIPS	Unit Diary/Marine Integrated Personnel System
USA	United States Army
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VEERP	volunteer enlisted early-release program

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First and foremost, I would like to thank my amazing wife, Erin, beautiful daughters, Mikayla and Violet, and son, Patrick, their your love, patience and encouragement throughout this chapter of our lives. I could not have done this without you in my corner pushing me forward. Erin, I am truly blessed to have you in my life, and I am thankful for all that you do; you are my motivation and my drive. Your devotion to our family as a wonderful mother and loving wife is remarkable. Thank you for constantly adapting to the changes that evolve along our path and creating a home environment that stands as a support to us all. I love you.

I would like to thank those who helped me throughout my studies, including Bill Hatch and Major Chad Seagren. Their guidance, knowledge, and direction throughout the program helped me every step of the way. Additionally, I could not have done it without Michelle Pagnani of the Graduate Writing Center. She was instrumental to my writing, keeping me on point and providing direction. I also would like to thank my classmates, particularly Gunnar Spafford and Kristin Shepherd, for the long study hours that paid off in the end.

Next, I would like to thank the Marines and civilians at M&RA, MARFORRES and MCIRSA who took time out of their day to provide me the information and knowledge necessary to conduct my research. I especially want to thank Robert McGuiness, Colonel Runzi, Colonel Garcia, Colonel Fox, Lieutenant Colonel Gagnon, Lieutenant Colonel Morris, Lieutenant Colonel Licari; Major Heath, Major Dimalanta, and Captain Holmes.

To Thomas Nelson, Lauren Yaw, and Gerald Lee: Your job is critical to the Marine Corps' readiness and the dedication you and your staff display is incredible. Thank you for taking time out of your important schedule to show me all that you have done to better our Marine Corps. I only can hope that my thesis will assist you in the readiness process.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. PURPOSE**

This study examines key factors in the Marine Corps Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) screening process and provides recommendations for optimizing reserve-force readiness. The IRR is the second-largest component of the Marine Corps, with approximately 70,000 ready reservists on average throughout the year.<sup>1</sup> The IRR inventory includes a variety of ranks and military occupational specialties (MOS). The newly formed Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity (MCIRSA) has assumed the duties of the former mobilization command (MOBCOM) and performs under a tight budget to contact Marines in the inactive reserves and muster individuals into the IRR component as required.

With the assistance of the Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) readiness support program (RSP), MCIRSA has struggled to proactively manage the IRR screening participation rate. Many MCIRSA actions are reactive as they respond to mustering goals under broad guidance from Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC). For each fiscal year, MCIRSA implements annual goals for mustering a quota of Marines who meet medical standards and are competent in occupational specialties needed in case of emergency, as outlined in Title 10, U.S.C.<sup>2</sup>

### **B. BACKGROUND**

The purpose of the IRR, according to Title 10, U.S.C. subtitle E, is to provide qualified personnel as necessary to augment the active component. IRR personnel may be called upon in time of war, national emergency, or threat to national security.

MCIRSA is tasked with identifying and screening available IRR Marines to support contingency operations. The IRR is qualitatively and monetarily screened by the Marine Corps. IRR members are screened for medical and personal problems, including

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Nelson and Lauren Yaw (Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity (MCIRSA) brief and in discussion with the author, 20 November 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Title 10, U.S.C. section 10102.

financial, before being activated to optimize cost savings and increase readiness by eliminating unsuitable candidates. Adjusting the screening process to prepare for anticipated readiness requirements also meets Department of Defense guidelines when filling shortfalls in the active component (AC) as set forth in Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 1235.13.<sup>3</sup> Current MCIRSA goals align with Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3000.19B, which is the Marine Corps total force mobilization, activation, integration, and deactivation plan (MAID-P). Colonel Clay Runzi, the head of Reserve Individual Manpower (RIM) programs, describes the IRR screening process as phase zero of the six-phase USMC MAID-P.<sup>4</sup> MCIRSA seeks to avoid repeating the difficulties experienced during the last involuntary activation of 2,500 IRR Marines in fall 2006 through spring 2007, which is the essence of this research.

An analysis of the current IRR structure shows approximately 68,102 personnel are enrolled in the IRR, as of the end of fiscal year 2014. This total does not represent eligible members available for continued service, however; when less-than-honorable and medical discharges are excluded, a more executable number is calculated. If an involuntary mobilization is again declared, MCIRSA must be prepared to quickly identify and locate the right Marines to fill HQMC desired billets. An ability to filter for unqualified personnel efficiently will accelerate MCIRSA execution of the MAID-P. Guided by requirements established by Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA), MCIRSA would be able to fine-tune the screening process and avoid contacting random members whose training and expertise may not be relevant in the circumstances.

## C. COMMAND STRUCTURE

The total Marine Corps reserve force under Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) is organized into three components: ready, standby, and retired reserves, as shown in Figure 1. This section focuses primarily on the Ready Reserves and its

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<sup>3</sup>Department of Defense, *Administration and Management of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and the Inactive National Guard (ING)*, DOD Instruction 1235.13, Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Colonel Clay Runzi, in discussion with author, 12 December 2014.

constituents, the Selected Reserves (SelRes) and the IRR.<sup>5</sup> Chapter II of this research discusses the IRR in detail.

For further information on the standby and retired reserves, see the organizational analysis in the Naval Postgraduate School MBA professional report, *An Analysis of Factors Affecting Affiliation in the Marine Corps Reserves*.<sup>6</sup> Details on the reserve components are found in MCO 1001R.1K, *Marine Corps Reserve Administrative Management Manual* (MCRAMM).<sup>7</sup>

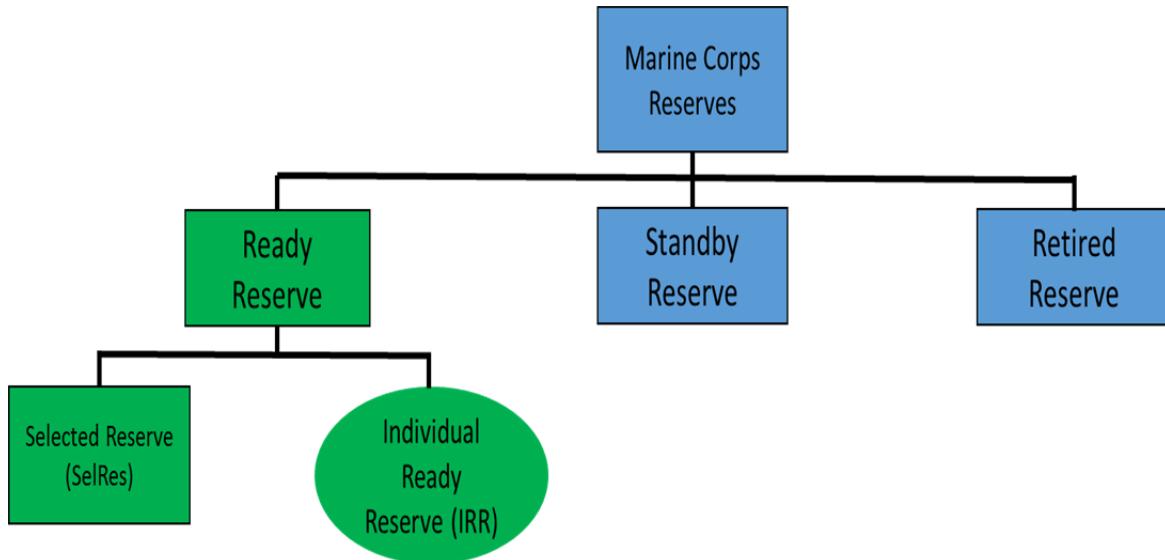


Figure 1. Components of the Marine Corps Reserves<sup>8</sup>

## 1. Ready Reserve

The ready reserve categories and subdivisions are shown in Figure 2. All ready reservists are eligible for recall to active duty in case of national emergency.<sup>9</sup> Each type

<sup>5</sup> Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009), 1–6.

<sup>6</sup> Benny Volkmann, Adam Shapiro, and Jason Barnes, “An Analysis of Factors Affecting Affiliation in the Marine Corps Reserves” (MBA professional report, Naval Postgraduate School, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009)

<sup>8</sup> Image from Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009), 1–6. Modified by the author.

<sup>9</sup> Title 10, United States Code, section 10102

of ready reserve has a particular structure, depending on the assigned mission. The Marines serving in the Ready Reserves are either; obligors who are fulfilling their military service obligation (MSO), or are non-obligors having already completed their obligation and are serving at their own discretion.<sup>10</sup> The number of ready reserve Marines at the end of fiscal year 2014 is shown in Figure 3.

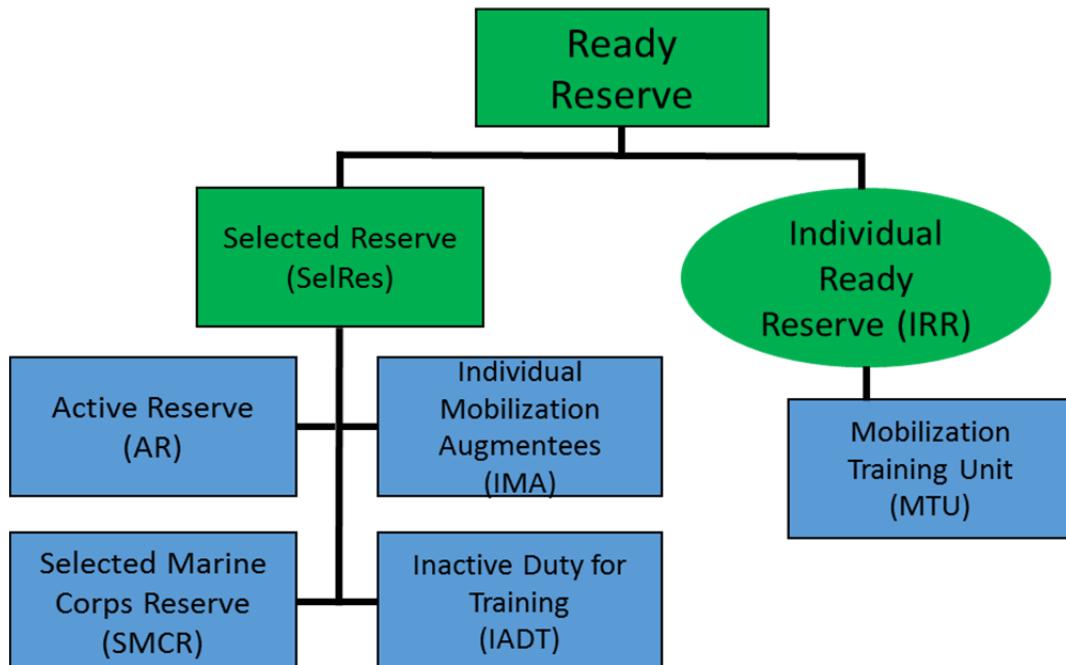


Figure 2. Total Force Marine Corps Reserves<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009), 1–2.

<sup>11</sup> Image from Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009), 1–6. Modified by the author.

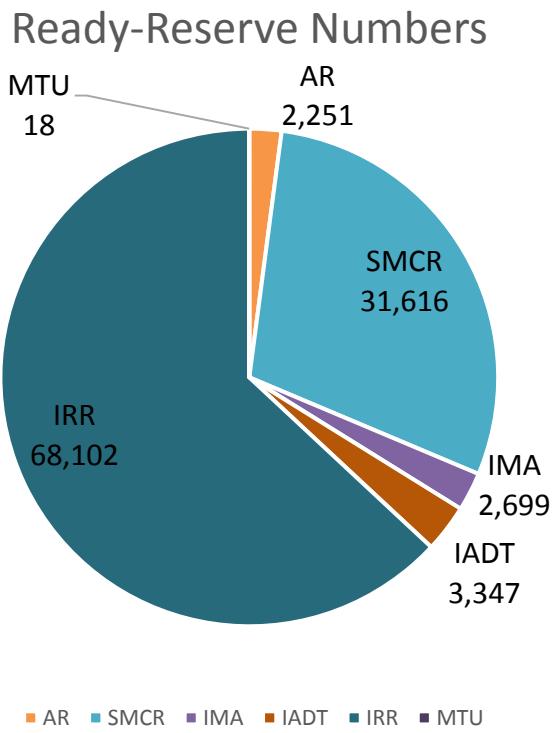


Figure 3. FY 2014 Ready Reserve Force<sup>12</sup>

*a.*      ***Selected Reserve***

The SelRes subcategories are the Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR), IMA, Active Reserve (AR), and Inactive Duty for Training (IADT).<sup>13</sup> Congress' 2014 Appropriations bill authorized the Marines Corps Reserve's end strength as 39,200 Marines in a drilling status.<sup>14</sup> Reserve units are located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico, allowing Marines to report to a local command.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Diagram from MCIRSA brief by Thomas Nelson. "Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity 101" (unpublished PowerPoint, 4 October 2014). Modified by the author.

<sup>13</sup> Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009), 1–6.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Defense, *Defense Manpower Requirements Report Fiscal Year 2013* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2013), 83.

<sup>15</sup> Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009), 1–2.

### **(1) Selected Marine Corps Reserve**

The SMCR is an active ready reserve subordinate to MARFORRES. The unit structure of the SMCR is similar to the active component's four elements in the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF), consisting of the 4th Marine Division (4th MarDiv), 4th Marine Logistics Group (4th MLG), 4th Marine Air Wing (4th MAW) and the MARFORRES Force Headquarters Group (FHG). These units are trained and ready for mobilization to augment the active component in contingencies.<sup>16</sup>

### **(2) Individual Mobilization Augmentee**

An IMA Marine is a member of the SelRes and a drilling reservist in an independent role. An IMA billet may be assigned to an AC organization as an augmentee, a selective-service system, or to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). IMAs support mobilizations, contingency operations, operations other than war, or other requirements that use their specialized or technical expertise.<sup>17</sup>

Inactive Drill Training (IDT) and Annual Training (AT) requirements are mandatory and coordinated with the active-duty counterpart to accommodate the reservist's availability during the fiscal year. MCIRSA provides limited administrative support to IMA members. IMA billet assignments with the RSP directly support MCIRSA; the RSP contacts and screens IRR Marines during drill hours and assists MCIRSA with annual musters conducted around the continental United States (CONUS).<sup>18</sup> Chapter IV further covers the functions of the RSP.

### **(3) Active Reserve**

The AR consists of reserve Marines on active duty who provide full-time support to SelRes components. The current end strength for reservists on active duty within the AR program is 2,261, in accordance with the 2014 Appropriations Bill. These billets

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<sup>16</sup> Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009), 1–2

<sup>17</sup> Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009), 1–2 - 1–3.

<sup>18</sup> Department of the Navy, *Individual Marine Augment (IMA) Program* (MCO 1001.62A) (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2012)

consist mainly of administration, recruiting, retention, instruction, and reserve-training functions. The AR program is designed to give reserve components the full-time support necessary to ensure efficient program management and reservist training.<sup>19</sup>

#### **(4) Initial Active-Duty Training**

Every reservist goes through an IADT that includes basic military training, combat training, and technical skill training. Once these Marines complete IADT, they join their obligated SelRes component.<sup>20</sup>

##### ***b. Individual Ready Reserve***

As the second-largest personnel component in the Marine Corps, the IRR pool of ready reservists is available for augmentation to the SelRes or as Individual Augmentees (IA) to the AC. Many IRR Marines previously served on active duty or in the SMCR for their initial contractual agreement. An IRR Marine has no current active-duty commitment or affiliation with the SMCR, yet may still have an MSO. Many reservists remain by choice or are in the delayed-entry program, awaiting basic training.<sup>21</sup>

#### **(1) Mobilization Training Units**

A mobilization training unit (MTU) provides an opportunity for Active-Status List (ASL) and IRR Marines in a non-pay status to perform duties that fulfill retirement points.<sup>22</sup>

### **D. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY**

The objective of this research is to analyze key factors associated with the screening of IRR Marines and suggest improvements. The study includes a literature

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<sup>19</sup> Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009), 1–3.

<sup>20</sup> Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009), 2–2/A-7.

<sup>21</sup> Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009), 1–3/A-6.

<sup>22</sup> Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Reserve Administration Management Manual* (MCO 1001R.1K), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2009), 6–9/A-8.

review and close examination of IRR screening processes, requirements and procedures, past and present, as performed by MCIRSA according to standard operating procedures. Observations by the researcher include a mega-muster site visit and discussions with stakeholders at HQMC, MARFORRES and MCIRSA. A data pull is used to establish the construct of the IRR component in its state. After analyzing current processes, this research makes recommendations for optimizing the process in support of contingency operations.

## **E. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- 1. Primary Research Questions**
  - a. How Can the Marine Corps Optimize the IRR for Program Quality and Cost Effectiveness?*
  - b. Does the Current Screening Process Satisfy the Anticipated Readiness Requirements of the Manpower Personnel and Policy and Manpower Management Divisions?*
- 2. Secondary Research Questions**
  - a. What Variables Cause IRR Marines to be found Qualified or Unqualified for Continued Service?*
  - b. What Target Goals will Enable MCIRSA to Obtain an Acceptable Readiness Level?*

## **F. SCOPE**

The newly formed MCIRSA structure of the former MOBCOM faces budget constraints in the task of contacting and mustering every Marine in the IRR component during an individual's time in the inactive reserves. A limited staff, assisted by IMA's RSP, has struggled to perform in a proactive and efficient manner. Much of the action taken is responsive in nature and merely aims to meet the goal of mustering individuals in the IRR without operational guidance from HQMC to focus efforts on the needs of the AC. The scope of this thesis includes:

- (1) An examination of the purpose and function of the IRR
- (2) An analysis of past and present screening processes to identify efficiencies

(3) Identification of anticipated requirements among M&RA and HQMC's Manpower Management division (MM) and Manpower Plans and Policy division (MP) for the benefit of MCIRSA

(4) Calculation of IRR true numbers

(5) Analysis of the current mustering process

(6) Analysis of costs associated with screening

## **G. ORGANIZATION**

Chapter II discusses the IRR component, its history, benefits, and problems.

Chapter III examines previous studies and the military publications driving the screening process.

Chapter IV presents research results and observations.

Chapter V provides conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

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## II. BACKGROUND

The importance of the role of IRR Marines is somewhat misconceived, and the literature on the ready-reserves is limited. This chapter provides a background for discussing IRR structure, benefits, and issues.

### A. INTRODUCTION

The United States Congress directs the Department of Defense (DOD) to maintain an inactive, ready force in all branches of service in case of an emergency, per Title 10, U.S.C. 10102. The requirement of maintaining a ready force is authorized by each branch of the services, to maintain and operate as necessary;<sup>23</sup> thus, the literature on reserve forces differs among the services, depending on the nature of their need.

The roles and responsibilities of the IRR are often misunderstood, unless an individual happens to be assigned to a command that manages or relies on the component. IRR members are inactive and separate from the Marine Corps operating forces, but their readiness and availability are vital in filling shortfalls within the active and reserve components. The Marine Corps uses the IRR for voluntary mobilizations and to make up shortfalls in the IMA and SMCR. According to Title 10, if Congress requires additional forces, they may direct the ready reserves to augment the active component.

The IRR and standby reserves were reformed via two pieces of legislation. The first was the Armed Forces Reserve Act of 1952, reorganizing the reserves into ready, standby, and retired. The second legislation was the Reserve Forces Act of 1955, creating a required reserve obligated service after active duty, if contractual time remains. In 1972, the development of the total-force policy allowed the military to maintain reservists rather than draftees or volunteers. As explained in the Congressional Budget Office study “Can the Individual Reserves Fill Mobilization Needs?” the overall size of the active forces can be reduced if augmentation by reserve forces is employed in emergencies.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Title 10, United States Code, section 10144

<sup>24</sup> Comptroller General, *Can the Individual Ready Reserves Fill Mobilization Needs?* (GAO FPCD-79-3) (Washington, DC: General Accounting Office, 1979).1–2

The implementation of the IRR supports the Marine Corps with a ready force of pre-trained Marines at minimal cost.

## **B. IRR STRUCTURE**

The IRR is a manpower pool of individuals available for mobilization from an inactive status. Each member is trained and has previously served in the active forces or selected reserves, and may be called upon for involuntary active-duty training and fulfillment of mobilization requirements.<sup>25</sup> An IRR member is a part of this component if he needs to complete his remaining MSO, has voluntarily agreed to continue in the ready reserves past his mandatory obligation, or has been granted special authorization to transfer to the IRR with a remaining MSO and mandatory participation.<sup>26</sup> Title 10, U.S.C. section 10144, directs the Marine Corps to establish grades and military skills and specialties in support of potential mobilizations.

### **1. IRR Organization**

According to Operational Data Store Enterprise (ODSE), IRR manpower end strength at the end of fiscal year 2014 (FY-14) was 68,102. The IRR Marine on average is 25 years of age, male, and single. The 68,102 available Marines is mainly composed of 35,709 corporals and 17,151 sergeants. Most members have completed one active-duty enlistment, and 76 percent have completed at least one combat tour. Most of the Marines in the IRR have been attached for fewer than three years and drop from the roles once obligated service is completed, as shown in Figure 4. The MOS for officers and enlisted in the IRR at the end of FY 2014 is shown in Figures 5 and 6. The highest MOS percentage is in the infantry field.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Department of Defense, *Defense Manpower Requirements Report Fiscal Year 2013* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2013), iv.

<sup>26</sup> Diagram from MCIRSA brief by Thomas Nelson. “Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity 101” (unpublished PowerPoint, 4 October 2014). Modified by the author.

<sup>27</sup> Diagram from MCIRSA brief by Thomas Nelson. “Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity 101” (unpublished PowerPoint, 4 October 2014). Modified by the author.

Under Title 10, every IRR member is required by law to do the following:

- Keep contact information current
- Notify MCIRSA of changes in health, family status, and employment
- Complete a medical report every two years
- Maintain uniforms
- Retain a military identification card
- Attend musters when ordered
- Maintain physical, height, and weight standards

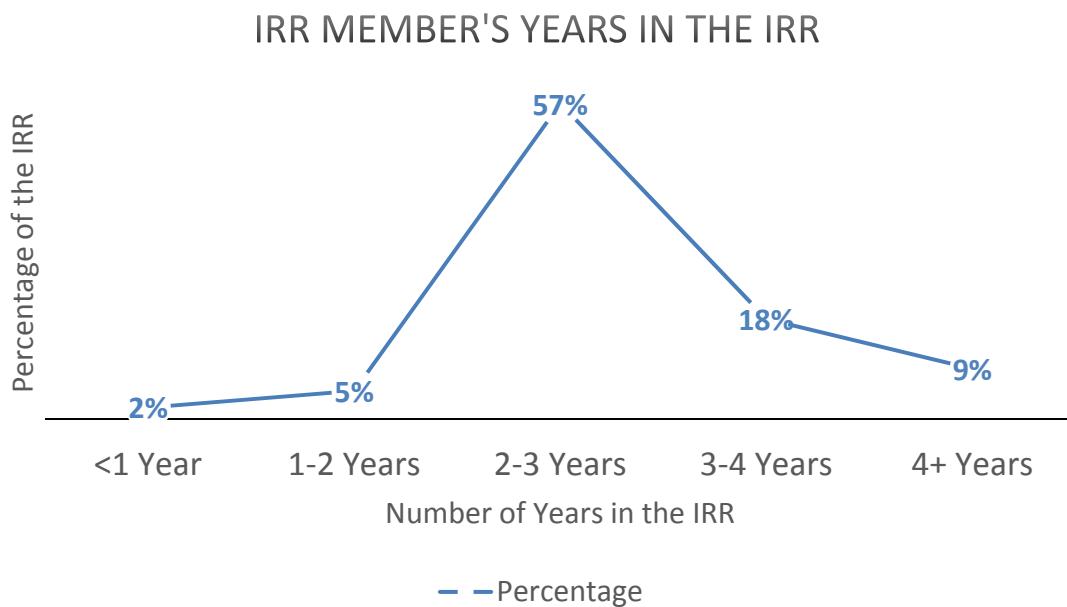


Figure 4. Number of Years in the IRR.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Diagram from MCIRSA brief by Thomas Nelson. "Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity 101" (unpublished PowerPoint, 4 October 2014). Modified by the author.

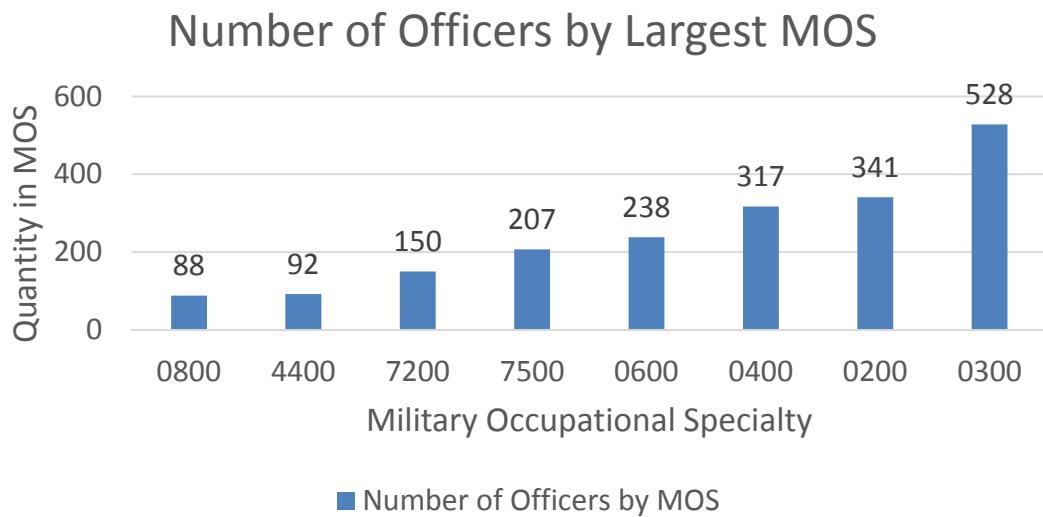


Figure 5. Available Officers by MOS<sup>29</sup>

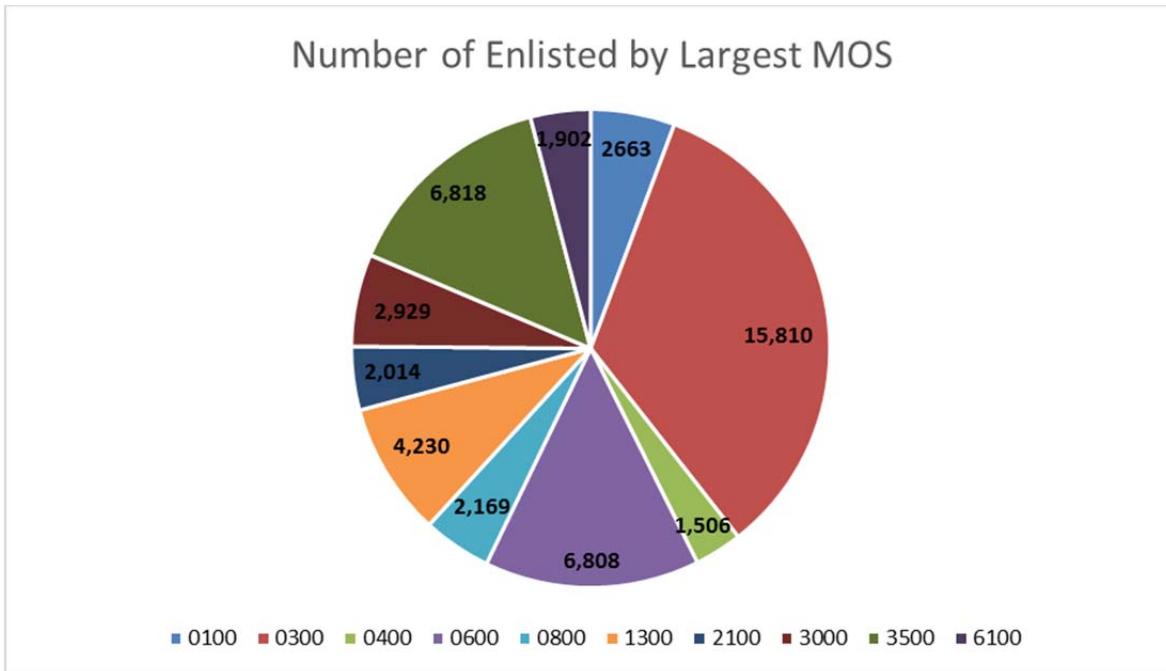


Figure 6. Available Enlisted Personnel by MOS<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Diagram from MCIRSA brief by Thomas Nelson. “Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity 101” (unpublished PowerPoint, 4 October 2014). Modified by the author.

<sup>30</sup> Diagram from MCIRSA brief by Thomas Nelson. “Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity 101” (unpublished PowerPoint, 4 October 2014). Modified by the author.

## **2. Maintaining the IRR**

Maintaining an IRR of pre-trained individuals allows the Marine Corps to augment AC and RC requirements in exigencies such as war. Alternatives include assessing and training a non-prior-service recruit or gapping a billet.<sup>31</sup>

### **a. Bridging Peacetime and Contingency Operations**

Improved planning to anticipate mobilization needs bridges the gap between peacetime manpower and contingency-operation requirements. Knowing the number of available skilled IRR members in case of congressional direction and the cost of familiarizing the member are essential in ensuring a ready force. A 1986 RAND study recommends that a cost-benefit analysis to determine which specialties are most efficiently drawn from the IRR would help the services fund their components.<sup>32</sup> The identification of these specialties and required training might prove advantageous to the AC and RC.<sup>33</sup>

### **b. The Transition to Civilian Life**

The director of MCIRSA, sends a quarterly newsletter to every IRR Marine. This newsletter assists the transition to civilian life by communicating job resources, reserve opportunities, medical outreach, muster information, promotion opportunities, how to earn points for retirement, and overall military awareness. Most importantly, it assures the Marines that the Corps has not forgotten about their service and keeps them engaged and informed.

### **c. Retaining Skills and Experience**

The IRR allows the Marine Corps to maintain specific occupational specialties and experience of Marines pursuing civilian careers, while providing an option to

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<sup>31</sup> Department of Defense, *Defense Manpower Requirements Report Fiscal Year 2013* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2013), 83.

<sup>32</sup> Susan Bodilly, Judith Fernandez, Jackie Kimbrough, and Susanna Purnell, *Individual Ready Reserve Skill Retention and Refresher Training Options* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1986).

<sup>33</sup>Susan Bodilly, Judith Fernandez, Jackie Kimbrough, and Susanna Purnell, *Individual Ready Reserve Skill Retention and Refresher Training Options* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1986).

continue their service and “Stay Marine.”<sup>34</sup> This policy benefits both the individual and the Corps, as personal needs and operational requirements are addressed.

***d. Location Spread***

The vast spread of the 68,102 Marines dispersed across the United States makes it difficult to muster every individual annually under a budget inadequate to reach every member. IRR population by state residence, as of September 2014, is presented in Figure 7. The readiness support program is divided into five regions to assist MCIRSA (headquartered in New Orleans) in mustering local reservists. Musters are held in the heavily populated locations of the region. MCIRSA screens a minimum of 1,000 Marines within 150 miles of a designated muster site, to which Marines in receipt of orders must report for screening. The random screening method currently employed may miss reservists of a desired caliber if the individual is outside the geographical muster range. Annual musters are conducted in highly populated areas to assemble the largest possible population of IRR members; MCIRSA does not target specialties when orders are mailed.<sup>35</sup>

MCIRSA aims to muster a minimum of 10,000 Marines every fiscal year, with ten mega-muster sites across the United States and more regional musters as supportable by the regional RSP.<sup>36</sup> Marines who were released within a current fiscal year are not contacted for screening purposes, in accordance with DODI 1215.06. All others are contacted, at minimum by phone, by RSP representatives for screening.

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<sup>34</sup> Department of Defense, *Defense Manpower Requirements Report Fiscal Year 2013* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2013), 83

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Nelson, “Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity 101” (unpublished PowerPoint, during MCIRSA Brief, 4 October 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Nelson and Lauren Yaw (MCIRSA Operations Section), in discussion with the author, 20 November 2014.

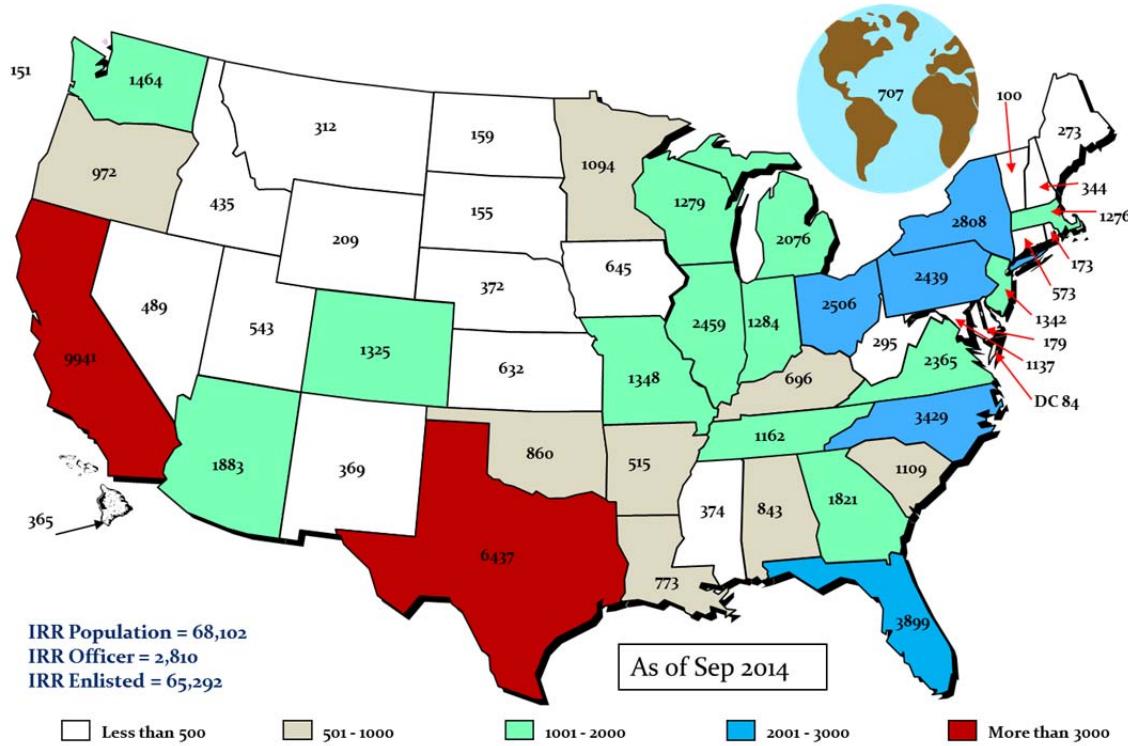


Figure 7. IRR Population by State of Residence, September 2014<sup>37</sup>

### C. CURRENT SCREENING PROCESS

MCIRSA's mission is to screen IRR members for the MAID-P, as described in MCO 3000.19B. Using the guidance and requirements set forth by Title 10, U.S.C, DOD instructions, and DOD directives, MCIRSA develops plans to meet the goals of the MAID-P process. DODI 1235.12 states that "the IRR is to be screened, maintained, and individually prepared for activation as a pre-trained manpower pool to ensure the total force is completely resourced in the event of a contingency operation, national emergency, or war."<sup>38</sup> MCIRSA conducts 10 mega-musters at highly populated locations around CONUS to screen 10,000 IRR Marines annually. All remaining IRR Marines are contacted via telephone calls. MCIRSA uses the IMA RSP to contact IRR Marines for phone screenings, in which RSP Marines query the member on a series of items during a

<sup>37</sup> Diagram from MCIRSA brief by Thomas Nelson. "Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity 101" (unpublished PowerPoint, 4 October 2014).

<sup>38</sup> Department of Defense, *Accessing the Reserve Components (RC)*, DOD Instruction 1235.12, (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2012).

standard fifteen- to thirty-minute phone call. The purpose of this outreach is to interact with IRR Marines to ensure contact information is correct, personal information is up to date, and overall well-being is good. Regional musters are held quarterly in each of the five RSP regions during a fiscal year, as shown in Figure 8.

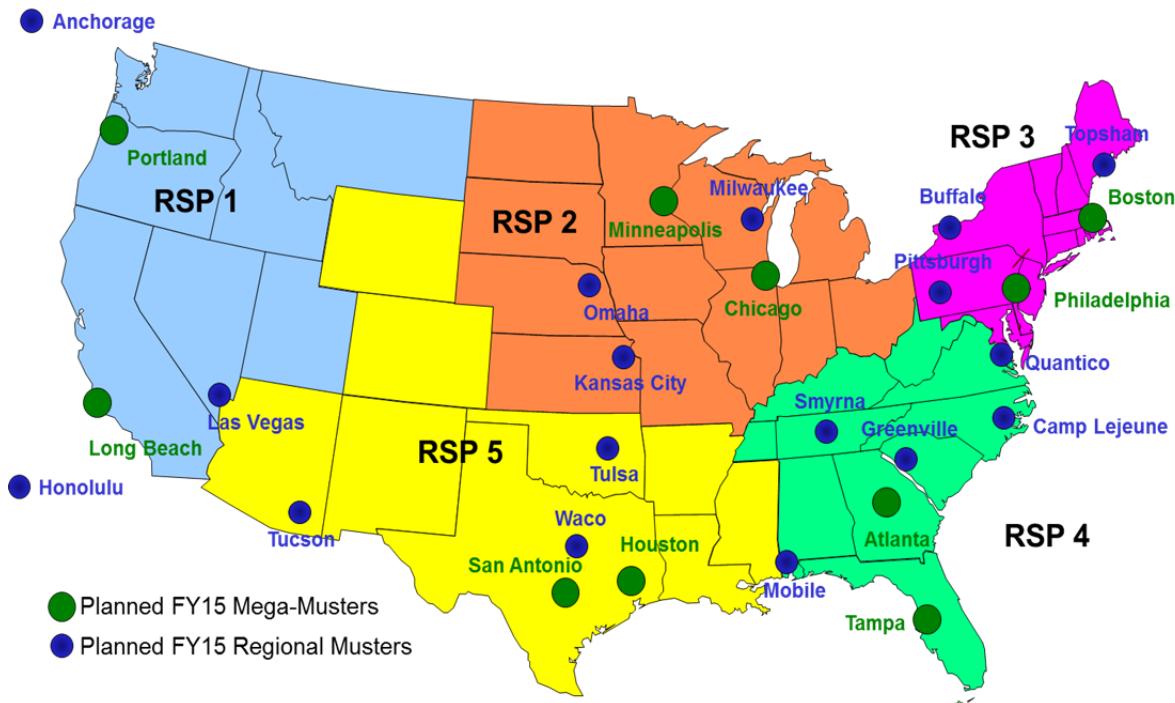


Figure 8. Planned Mega and Regional Musters for FY15<sup>39</sup>

### 1. Atlanta Mega-Muster Site Visit

There are two types of muster events: single-site mega-musters and regional musters. Mega-musters are conducted 10 times a year in major cities around the United States and comprise two sessions, mustering 500 IRR Marines per session. The rate of attendance at a mega-muster averages 60 percent; the Atlanta mega-muster held on 13 December 2014 was typical, as shown in Table 1. Marines who are contacted after failing to attend are given an opportunity to be screened by phone and provide a reason for missing muster duty. Common reasons are provided in Table 2.

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<sup>39</sup> Diagram from MCIRSA brief by Thomas Nelson. “Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity 101” (unpublished PowerPoint, 4 October 2014).

<b>Number of Marines</b>	<b>Qty</b>
Orders mailed	1,107
Orders returned (bad address)	99
Marines that attended muster	661
Marines excused from muster	77
No shows	362
No shows contacted after the muster	134
Total screened from the Atlanta Muster	872
Percentage of show rate	60%
Overall screening effect	79%

Table 1. Statistics for Marines Screened During the Atlanta Mega-Muster<sup>40</sup>

<b>Ordered Marine's Reason for Absence</b>	<b>Qty</b>
Change of Address	107
Employment Conflict	10
Family Issues	5
Joined other Branch of Service	9
Medical Issue	5
Never Received Orders	29
Outside Continental United States	5
Over 150 Miles	4
School Conflict	11
Ineligible (ISL/Orders)	2
Transferred to SMCR	1
Other	30

Table 2. Reasons for Absence from Atlanta Mega-Muster<sup>41</sup>

Data is scrubbed for valid reenlistment codes; sufficient time remaining on the reserve end-of-current-contract (RECC), to ensure member is not currently on orders; rank requirement; and separation code. If the remaining population size exceeds the number of Marines supportable by the RSP staff and the venue, additional criteria are considered, such as MOS or years remaining on contract.

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<sup>40</sup> Atlanta Muster results provided to the author by Lauren Yaw, Operations Section for MCIRSA, February 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Atlanta Muster results provided to the author by Lauren Yaw, Operations Section for MCIRSA, February 2015.

Upon arrival at a muster, the Marine reports to the RSP staff and receives a check-in sheet and muster package. If the Marine is trained in a critical MOS shortfall or requires a medical screening, he is handed additional forms to report to the prior-service recruiters (PSR) or medical station, respectively. Stations required to complete the muster process include administration, medical, and Veterans Affairs (VA), and the Marine must attend briefs on incentives and opportunities from the PSR, career planner, VA, MARFORRES commanding general, and sergeant major. Once briefing is concluded, all stations are completed, and administration packages are returned, the Marine is dismissed. The current goal of the muster is accomplished once the Marine's information is updated, medical screening is complete, and well-being outreach has been achieved.

*a. Administration*

MCIRSA uses an internally linked database to update member contact information; at the Atlanta mega-muster, two RSP Marines assisted Marines in confirming contact and personal information on laptop computers. Pertinent changes include number of dependents, marital status, career, contact numbers, and home address. The IRR members fill out a direct-deposit form to receive payment for muster attendance.

*b. Medical*

The Atlanta mega-muster's medical staff, under the direct supervision of Gerard J. Lee of MCIRSA medical section, conducted a full medical screening on each member. Gathering enough practitioners or corpsmen to assist at a mega-muster medical screening is a major challenge for MCIRSA. Marines are responsible to maintain medical records per Title 10, U.S.C., and notify MCIRSA regarding previous and new issues that would prevent them from serving. Only those scheduled for a periodic health assessment or post-deployment health reassessment receive physical exams. All others are screened verbally and visually as time permits. Injuries preventing further service may have occurred during active duty, yet not reported to the VA until after termination of active service. Other injuries may have occurred after the end of active service and filed only with the VA. According to Lee, the MCIRSA medical staff is generally unaware of the medical status of an IRR Marine prior to arrival, as VA records are not shared with

MCIRSA unless provided to them from the individual.<sup>42</sup> The medical staff screens Marines receiving more than 50 percent VA benefits to identify if they are medically qualified. If a Marine receives less than 50 percent, or is currently not receiving VA benefits, he is deemed qualified until subsequent screening before recall to active duty. Those Marines deemed unqualified for mobilization due to a permanent injury are labeled as tier-4 in the MCIRSA system.

*c. Prior Service Recruiters and Career Planners (CarPlan)*

Prior Service Recruiters (PSR) mainly recruit from the IRR, with the exception of SMCR Marines who may transition to an IMA billet. At the Atlanta muster, the author observed a long line of Marines seeking reserve opportunities to continue serving in the Marine Corps. The Tricare reserve-select option available to SelRes Marines is a big attraction for Marines joining the SMCR out of the IRR. The recent reduction in force has left many IRR Marines with a strong desire for further service. Prior-service recruiter Sergeant Kurt L. Chmielewski states that he relies heavily on musters.<sup>43</sup> PSRs receive a target from MCRC to fill particular reporting-unit code (RUC) vacancies by rank and occupational specialty. The muster provides the PSR with a captive audience and allows a face-to-face initial assessment of the Marine's status, rather than relying on just a phone call.

MARFORRES career planners speak with the Marines in an all-hands brief to raise awareness of educational benefits, incentives offered, and to clarify misconceptions. The discussion includes reenlistment or extension in the IRR or IMA and how to earn a satisfactory year, retire from the IRR or IMA, update records in Marine Online, and contact the career planner or PSR. The brief provides a single point of contact to assist with future inquiries.

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<sup>42</sup> Gerald Lee (MCIRSA Medical Section), in discussion with author, 13 December 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Sergeant Kurt L. Chmielewski, in discussion with author, 13 December 2014.

*d. Marine for Life*

A Marine for Life (M4L) mentor is available at musters to help IRR Marines transition to civilian life. Mentors operate in the local community and network with Marine-friendly employers. Marines are indoctrinated in the M4L program via a transition brief during the separation process. The program provides information on resume building, educational benefits, career fairs, and mentorships. IMA Marines assigned to the M4L program in the local area are available to provide consultation on request, to serve as a resource for a Marine's new career choice. This program does not attempt to recruit Marines for active service, but rather, assists the individual's career after service.

*e. Results*

The importance of maintaining a ready force hinges on the IRR's preparedness from screening. MCIRSA mustering benefits the Marine Corps in many ways. Of primary importance is the data derived from screening. Health screenings ensure IRR manpower availability in case of emergency. Because mustering is an effective way to check in on recruits, the current attendance rate of only 60 percent is of concern within the Marine Corps. The information campaign on musters can help increase attendance by communicating the purpose and advantages of muster duty. Marines commonly arrive at a muster unaware of what to expect and why they received orders. Some believe they are being screened for mobilization. The author observed web-based discussion boards and blogs in which Marines ask about their orders and receive incorrect information from peers.

**2. Readiness Support Program**

As MCIRSA is not equipped structurally to screen and muster more than 70,000 IRR Marines in a fiscal year, they rely on Readiness Support Program (RSP) support. The RSP is an IMA program specifically designed to assist MCIRSA with the IRR readiness by contacting, screening, and mustering IRR members. Staff within the five RSP regions collect data on those IRR Marines that reside in their area of responsibility. The proposed mega- and regional musters for FY2015 are shown in Figure 8. Regional musters are held

specifically by the RSP staff in one of the five regions. The number of IRR Marines mustered is anticipated to range from 50 to 300 in one day's screening, based on the number of RSP available to support.

*a. Responsibilities*

The responsibilities of an RSP Marine are broken into five categories: muster preparation and support, annual training, administrative tasks, contact and screening, and muster confirmation and screening. The reserve Marines assigned to an RSP spend approximately 42 of the 48 drills each year on IRR screening and muster support, including hosting two mega-musters in the fiscal year.<sup>44</sup>

*b. Screening Capability*

MCIRSA, with the assistance of 200 RSP Marines, contacts and screens IRR Marines year round. MCIRSA estimates that two IRR Marines can be contacted and screened by a staff member per hour, over a four-hour drill period. The RSP Marines spend ten hours a month on the task and are capable of contacting 76,800 IRR Marines per year. When an IRR member fails to update his information with MCIRSA, the RSP Marine must spend additional time researching this information, wasting limited drill time. This distraction reduces the number of contacts possible in a fiscal year.<sup>45</sup>

**D. STRENGTHS**

The current screening process has many aspects that work well or may be modified for greater benefit. Currently, screening is performed by phone and muster. Adding new educational materials on IRR options that are readily available to potential members may increase participation. The newly implemented tier system, designed to efficiently track Marines as to availability and participation status, is a step in the right direction. Another step is using the IRR Marines for involuntary mobilizations as a last resort, to support and respect their next chapter in life.

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<sup>44</sup> Thomas Nelson and Lauren Yaw (MCIRSA Operations Section), in discussion with the author, 20 November 2014.

<sup>45</sup> MCIRSA, “Readiness Support Program” (unpublished PowerPoint, 20 November 2014).

## **1. Current Screening Process**

MCIRSA performs annual screening to comply with Title 10, U.S.C. 12304, in which the president of the United States orders the Secretary of Defense to involuntarily mobilize the reserves from inactive status to fill critical wartime requirements. Marine Corps Order (MCO) 300019B is the MAID-P used to activate and integrate individual augmentees from the IRR with the AC and SMCR. This order states, “IRR Marines will be used to provide additional manning to AC, activated SMCR units, and to source supported COMMARFOR projected casualty replacement requirements.”<sup>46</sup> The screening process of the IRR component is critical to preparedness in MAID-P execution.

The RSP regularly contacts IRR Marines—on average, 80 percent in a fiscal year. Currently, the RSP Marine works randomly down a contact list in their assigned region; the staff’s main focus is obtaining a 100 percent contact rate. There is no current vehicle for prioritizing efforts to locate and screen for the most important MOSs required to fill shortfalls or supply contingency operations. Marines released from active duty in a given fiscal year do not require RSP contact. There are no set goals, outside of performing a contact screening of every IRR Marine.<sup>47</sup> Past performance is the best means to locate those Marines optimally suited for future operations.

## **2. Current Mustering Methods**

The current method for mustering IRR Marines is summarized as follows: the MCIRSA musters the Marine in person, at a muster, or makes contact by phone. Those Marines within 150 miles of a muster site are likely to receive orders to appear at a muster. Each location only has one muster per fiscal year, and the IRR Marine is required to be available during a four-hour period, on a Saturday, for one session. Historical data shows that only 60 percent of the Marines attend muster and 40 percent of those who do not attend are later contacted by the RSP for screening and reason for absence. The overall contact rate after post-muster calls averages 80 percent.

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<sup>46</sup> Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Total Force Mobilization, Activation, Integration, and Deactivation Plan* (MCO 3000.19B) (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2013), 1–6.

<sup>47</sup> RSP-4 IMA Marines performing contacts, in discussion with the author, 13 December 2014.

MCIRSA provides opportunities to the Marine while at the muster to promote and reward attendance. Marines struggling with the transition to civilian life, finding jobs, or using networking are offered tools and information. Marine for Life counselors, local law enforcement, local fire departments and educational programs, stress and hardship counselors, and the VA host tables to assist with personal needs. Improvements and additions to this lineup are always possible in the quest to reduce costs and provide more opportunities to the IRR Marine.

### **3. Use of IRR Marines**

A Marine signs an initial contract for eight years of obligated service. Once transferred to the inactive reserves, the service member commonly believes that service is complete. One of the biggest fears of a war-ridden Marine separated from active service is to be recalled to active duty after transitioning back to a civilian life—buying a home, starting a family, and embarking on a new job. Limiting use of the IRR Marines to emergencies only is critical to maintaining morale. The IRR should be utilized as a last alternative to supplement the active component. The IRR was recently used for an involuntary mobilization for the war on terrorism; all other activations for mobilization have been on a voluntary basis to fill shortfalls in the SelRes and individual augments. The Marine Corps should maintain strict guidelines by not exceeding activation time, and use the Marine’s time prudently while activated and ensuring billets are related to occupational specialty.

### **4. MCIRSA Tiering System**

Nelson and Yaw have promoted a four-tiered process to identify Marines ready for continued service from the IRR by finding the best candidates for mobilization.<sup>48</sup> This tiered process is newly established and still in the design and implementation phase. In this system, the RSP contacts members and categorizes them according to a detailed tier level, using the individual-reserve management application. A weekly scrub of the list

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas Nelson and Lauren Yaw (MCIRSA Operations Section), in discussion with the author, 20 November 2014.

eliminates unqualified personnel with bad or medical reenlistment codes and nonparticipants.

The tiers rank from one to four, with tier one being an optimal Marine, fully qualified for duty. Tier four denotes Marines with unsatisfactory participation, bad or medical reenlistment codes, conditional release preventing continued service, assignment to the Inactive Status List (ISL), or less than 90 days remaining on their service obligation. Questions that help the RSP staff determine tier levels are:

1. Do you have any medical problems or VA disability rating that would preclude you from deploying?
2. Do you have any legal matters pending that would preclude you from deploying?
3. Do you need assistance accessing your Marine online account?
4. Are you aware of and interested in participating in paid reserve opportunities?
5. Have you updated your civilian employment information (CEI) in the last calendar year?

Once data is collected from screening, MCIRSA uses the Unit Diary/Marine Integrated Personnel System (UDMIPS) to input the data collected into the Marine Corps total-force system (MCTFS) using the four-character platoon code. Once this tiered system is fully implemented, a more accurate number of available Marines will be used as a starting point for mobilization. This availability will establish a basis for the execution of the MAID-P. The RSP would refer the IRR Marine to the MCIRSA medical section for further medical processing and the medical staff determines the tier level, based on medical status.<sup>49</sup> The current tiering system implemented by MCIRSA is described as follows.

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<sup>49</sup> Lauren Yaw (MCIRSA Operations Section), in discussion with the author, 20 February 2015.

**a.        *Tier One***

This tier signifies a Marine is fully qualified, with good contact information, reenlistment code, medical qualification, and more than 24 months remaining on contract.<sup>50</sup>

**b.        *Tier Two***

A second-tier Marine is fully qualified, with twelve to 24 months remaining on contract. Caveats that separate a tier two from a tier one include a 20 to 50 percent disability rating with the VA, conscientious objector status, pending adjudication, sole survivorship, and a dual military spouse, with dependents. A second-tier Marine is not exempt from mobilization, but these factors may prevent mobilization at the time of activation.<sup>51</sup>

**c.        *Tier Three***

A third-tier Marine has bad contact information and is not likely to respond to muster or activation. This Marine is not disqualified for mobilization, but is not in compliance with Title 10, U.S.C. requirements. Additional caveats for a tier three rating include less than twelve months remaining of obligated service, a request for sanctuary, extreme hardship, an Active Status Listing, enrollment in theology or divinity school, and being a sole parent likely to apply for mobilization exemption.<sup>52</sup>

**d.        *Tier Four***

A fourth-tier Marine is disqualified for mobilization. These Marines may have less than 90 days remaining in obligated service or be unfit morally and medically for service. Additional caveats for a tier four include bad reenlistment codes, conditional

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<sup>50</sup> Lauren Yaw. “IRR Tiering System” (unpublished PowerPoint during MCIRSA IRR Brief, 29 October 2014).

<sup>51</sup> Lauren Yaw. “IRR Tiering System” (unpublished PowerPoint during MCIRSA IRR Brief, 29 October 2014).

<sup>52</sup> Lauren Yaw. “IRR Tiering System” (unpublished PowerPoint during MCIRSA IRR Brief, 29 October 2014).

release, legal or administrative separation, civilian charges or arrest, inactive listing, and incomplete IADT.<sup>53</sup>

## **E. WEAKNESSES**

Once Marines have completed their initial active or SelRes obligation, they are transferred to the IRR, often with the impression that their service to the Marine Corps is complete. Young AC Marines lack the opportunity to intermingle with the RC causing them to miss what the RC encompasses. For some, the MCIRSA welcome-aboard package is the first exposure a Marine has on his new billet in the inactive reserves. It is not uncommon for MCIRSA to find wrong contact information in the system.

Administrators are not trained to handle the RC and rely mainly on the AR and SMCR to focus efforts on reserve issues. The Marine Corps Combat Service Support School (MCCSSS) curriculum does not discuss how to properly prepare or transfer Marines to the reserves. This creates a problem when the Marine departs from active duty and is part of the RC. Administration courses, from entry level to career level, do not focus on training active administration clerks on the IRR or the RC as a whole—this point is covered more extensively in Chapter IV.

### **1. Participation Requirements**

Incorrect or missing contact information from Marines transferred to the IRR poses a problem to MCIRSA. Member profiles may have barracks rooms and duty phone numbers from previous commands after separation. The Installation Personnel Administrative Center (IPAC) separations branch is responsible for inputting the appropriate type transaction codes (TTC) in UDMIPS for updating information upon discharge from active service. The individual Marine is then responsible to update and maintain contact with MCIRSA as instructed in DODI 1235.13 and DODI 1215.06. In some cases, Marines are not properly educated on the importance of these requirements while fulfilling their remaining obligated service. Other Marines are aware, but understand there are no repercussions for not updating information and participating. Any

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<sup>53</sup> Lauren Yaw. “IRR Tiering System” (unpublished PowerPoint, during MCIRSA IRR Brief, 29 October 2014).

Marine can find IRR requirements online, however, and not knowing is unacceptable and ignorant.

As stated in DODI 1215.13, pursuant to Title 10, U.S.C. section 12319, the Marine Corps is responsible for screening every member annually and ordering those slated to muster to complete other screening requirements, as needed. Those who fail to comply with these orders without an acceptable excuse are listed as unsatisfactory participants. Punishment or separation requirements allow a Marine with remaining MSO to separate from the IRR if deemed to have no potential for service in accordance with Title 10, U.S. C. section 12301, and to be discharged.<sup>54</sup> Reasons for discharge are provided in DODI 1215.13 and DODI 1332.14. Although IRR members do not fall under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, they can be separated from the IRR for unsatisfactory participation.

It is not unusual for MCIRSA and the RSP to find a Marine's contact information to be inaccurate or out of date.<sup>55</sup> This lack of attention increases man-hours enormously for IMA staff. Nelson and Yaw emphasize the laboriousness of searching for IRR member using all known avenues. MCIRSA's welcome-aboard letter repeats the service-member's responsibility for informing the Marine Corps of all changes cited in Title 10. The RSP maintains a 200 Marine IMA staff to contact every IRR Marine in a fiscal year. When a Marine fails to comply, manpower costs and limited drill time are wasted.

## **2. Knowledge and Skill Decay**

As Congress increased the obligated service from six to eight years, the concern arose that greater skill decay would adversely affect the overall readiness of the IRR member. Every member is responsible for completing his obligated service knowing that he may be recalled to active status. Training is on a voluntary basis and limited among the MOSs. Many of the IRR members have been in the RC for fewer than three years, as shown in Figure 4. Familiarization training is required to boost readiness levels upon

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<sup>54</sup>Department of Defense. *Fulfilling the Military Service Obligation* (MSO), DOD Instruction 1304.25. Washington, DC: Department of Defense (AT&L), October 31, 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Nelson and Lauren Yaw (MCIRSA Operations Section), in discussion with the author, 20 November 2014.

mobilization for those recalled to active duty, as skill decay statistically begins immediately following separation from active duty.

A 1991 United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, “Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Call-up: Skill Decay,”<sup>56</sup> demonstrates that within the first five months from separation, a service member starts to show skill decay, and within ten months, shows decay in weapons-qualification skills. Skill decay varies among specialties, with some retention higher than others. Retention is highest for those who entered the IRR directly from active duty. To mobilize an IRR member, initial testing on job performance is considered important by the United States Army.<sup>57</sup>

## F. SUMMARY

The IRR is a mandatory component, yet highly misunderstood by its members. Those involved in the daily operations of the IRR understand the opportunities and benefits it brings to the Marine Corps’ total-force structure. These personnel are normally found in the Reserve Affairs, Manpower Personnel and Policy (MP) and Manpower Management (MM) divisions, MARFORRES, and MCIRSA. Active-duty and reserve personnel do not regularly intermingle, and maintain separation pertaining to reserve issues. The lack of interoperability between AC and RC creates misperceptions by separating Marines. New RC Marines are unaware of their duties while attached to the IRR, making it difficult for MCIRSA to maintain an accurate and effective ready-reserve force.

Screening and managing the IRR is accomplished with minimal cost to the defense budget. MCIRSA is provided approximately two million dollars in stipend to pay Marines ordered to muster duty. Another two million is provided to execute the mustering of IRR Marines. The budget covers supplies, shipping, venues, staff orders, postage, equipment and maintenance, and 1164 reimbursements.<sup>58</sup> The benefit to maintaining the IRR Marines,

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<sup>56</sup> Robert A. Wisher, Mark A. Sabol, Hillel K. Sukenik, and Richard P. Kern, *Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Call-up: Skill Decay* (Alexandria, VA: United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, June 1991).

<sup>57</sup> Robert A. Wisher, Mark A. Sabol, Hillel K. Sukenik, and Richard P. Kern, *Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Call-up: Skill Decay* (Alexandria, VA: United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, June 1991).

<sup>58</sup> Lauren Yaw (MCIRSA Operations Section), in discussion with the author, 20 February 2015.

with their skills and experience, improves the Marine Corps' return on investment in support of contingency operations. There are strengths with the IRR regarding the availability of surplus manpower and maintaining pre-trained Marines at the ready. Some weaknesses of the IRR are caused by the inactivity of its members, the Marine Corps' losing contact, and reservist ignorance of a call-up or unwillingness to participate. These strengths and weaknesses can be optimized for better usefulness to the Marine Corps and the individual Marine, all while respecting financial constraints.

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### **III. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

A cross section of information supportive of an effective IRR screening process is reviewed in this chapter. DOD guidelines, Marine Corps Orders, and related studies on the screening process are listed and analyzed to identify potential constraints. This literature review is useful as an aid in fulfilling current policy and optimizing the IRR screening process.

#### **B. OPERATING UNDER CONSTRAINTS**

This review focuses on policy and sub-processes related to the screening process, muster duty, participation, time limits, and budgeting of the IRR. The Marine Corps' current screening process meets the criteria set forth in accordance with reserve-related DODD and DODI, under the direction of Title 10, U.S.C. Title 10, U.S.C., as the legal basis for the armed services to follow regarding roles, mission, and organizational structure. Subtitle E, Reserve Components of Title 10, U.S.C., directs the Marine Corps to raise a reserve force that augments the AC and SelRes during contingency operations. The DOD manages directives and instructions, regulating each branch of the service in a standardized manner to maintain a ready force. The directives and instructions bind MCIRSA and MARFORRES to prepare IRR members for further service, as required. IRR-related DODDs and DODIs, aligned with Title 10, U.S.C., are detailed in this literature review.

##### **1. Requirements for Screening**

All IRR members are screened annually to confirm whether they are available for further service or otherwise transferred from the ready reserves. DODD 1200.07, the Screening the Ready Reserve, section (5.3), delineates Marine Corps responsibilities in screening members of the IRR, per Title 10, U.S.C. section 10149. DODI 1235.13, Administration and Management of the Individual Ready Reserve and the Inactive National Guard, further describes the Marine Corps' responsibility to maintain current

and accurate member records. Each member is examined for physical fitness in accordance with DODI 1332.18, and the Marine Corps can discharge those who do not maintain satisfactory participation. This order formulates administrative guidance in screening IRR members, providing training, and ordering available members to support military operations, as directed by the president of the United States.

Screening-process guidance, per DODD 1200.7, is not provided in great detail. However, DODI 1235.13 describes the responsibilities of and procedures to be used by MCIRSA. MCIRSA's responsibilities per enclosure (2) of DODI 1235.13 are to:

- Ensure a sufficient number of members are trained with those specific skills required for immediate mobilization.
- Report screening results to Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC).
- Ensure members are aware upon joining the IRR of their obligations for satisfactory participation in the screening program.
- Notify all members of possible sanctions for failure to report or respond when ordered to participate.

Procedures that establish IRR training and screening requirements and screening goals are listed in enclosure (3) of DODI 1235.13: each member is required to 1) be screened to ensure they meet mental, moral, professional, and physical-fitness standards established by the Marine Corps; 2) possess the military qualifications required in the various ranks, grades, ratings, and specialties; and 3) be immediately available for mobilization, as specified in Title 10, U.S.C sections 12301(a) and 12302.<sup>59</sup>

As noted, inactive reservists are also responsible for maintaining readiness while fulfilling their service obligations and reporting changes in status. Reservists must also inform employers of their military obligation in the reserves.<sup>60</sup> The total-force strategy relies on the readiness and willingness of the Marines to comply with these instructions.

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<sup>59</sup> Department of Defense. *Administration and Management of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and the Inactive National Guard (ING)*, DOD Instruction 1235.13. (Washington, DC: Department of Defense), October 18, 2013. 9.

<sup>60</sup> Department of Defense. *Administration and Management of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and the Inactive National Guard (ING)*, DOD Instruction 1235.13. (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, October 18, 2013.

## **2. Muster Instructions and Directives**

The IRR screening process includes muster duty allowing the Marine Corps to physically review the Marines, update new changes within the Marine Corps and ensure each screened member is ready for future service. DODI 1235.13 establishes the criteria for mustering IRR Marines while attached to the RC. Members who receive orders for an annual muster are required to attend per Title 10, U.S.C. section 12319. Exemptions are provided in DODI 1235.13 and DODI 1215.06. Consequences for failing to appear at a muster and time limits for the muster are also set forth.

Compensation per muster is provided in Title 47, U.S.C. section 433 as 125 percent of the average per-diem rate of the United States (not to include Alaska and Hawaii). Travel and lodging are not authorized; the 150 muster-site radius is intended to minimize travel expenses. Musters are not required for officers in pay grade O-4 or higher or warrant officers and senior noncommissioned officers in pay grade E-8 or above. The Marine Corps has leeway as what is performed at the muster, to best suit its needs.

## **3. Participation Guidelines**

After a Marine completes his initial contractual active duty or SelRes, an inactive-service obligation remains for those with less than eight years of total service. DODI 1215.06, Uniform Reserve, Training, and Retirement Categories for the Reserve Components, lists requirements for the IRR member while attached to the IRR component. Enclosure 7 of the instruction, “Training Requirements,” provides a detailed description of the IRR member’s duties. Each member is required to serve a minimum of one day for muster duty per year, unless otherwise exempted per title 10, U.S.C. sections 10149, 10204, 10205, 10206, 12319, and 12644. Those IRR members not already scheduled for voluntary or involuntary training must participate. No IRR member shall serve more than 18 months in the IRR without participating in some form of screening. Members not required to participate include those who served on active status during the current fiscal year, reside outside the geographical limits of a muster, have skills or grade categories not required by the Marine Corps, or were screened in the current fiscal year.

Once screening and training are complete, MCIRSA submits the data to DMDC. MCIRSA is responsible to maintain and submit required information in accordance with DODI 1215.06, including physical condition, dependency status, military qualifications, civilian occupational skills, availability for service, present address, and other necessary information for active-duty recall.

To maintain satisfactory status, an IRR member must successfully complete active-duty training, muster duty, and annual screening as prescribed by MCIRSA. DODI 1215.13 Reserve Component (RC) Member Participation Policy provides a detailed list of the participation requirements of the RC and, more specifically, of those with remaining service obligation to participate in accordance with DODI 1213.06, DODI 1235.13, and DODI 1304.25. IRR members must be screened by MCIRSA by mail, phone, or electronically. Members of the IRR who have not fulfilled their MSO must participate as directed. IRR members who fail to perform in a satisfactory manner must provide evidence as to why. Those without an acceptable reason are placed in an unsatisfactory standing.<sup>61</sup>

MCIRSA is obligated to notify each member of the sanctions for failure to provide data requested, whether via a muster or other means. Enlisted IRR members who lack potential for future service and become unsatisfactory participants are subject to separation per DODI 1332.14 and DODI 1332.30. Commissioned officers with unsatisfactory participation are also subject to discharge from the IRR by recommendation from a board of officers. When a member with unsatisfactory participation is determined to possess potential for further service, he may be retained in the IRR or transferred to the ISL for the remainder of the service obligation.

#### **4. Time Limits for Activation Guidance**

The guideline when mobilizing Marines from the RC is 24-months' advance notice; however, this is not a guarantee when IRR personnel are directed to filling urgent roles in the AC and SelRes. DODD 1235.10, Activation, Mobilization, and

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<sup>61</sup> Department of Defense, *Reserve Component (RC) Member Participation Policy*, DOD Instruction 1215.13. (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, May 11, 2009), 9–10.

Demobilization of the Ready Reserve, pertains to the involuntary activation and use of reserve forces under Title 10, U.S.C. sections 12301(a), 12301(b), 12302, 12406, and voluntary activation under section 12301(d). The directive refers to activations from the IRR for SelRes units and individual augments assigned to active-duty units.

To alleviate some of the pressure placed on IRR members, flexibility is built into the system to maximize their utility, limit mobilization frequencies, and replace individuals when additional forces are available for rotation. Units and individuals of the ready reserves are to be kept on active duty no longer than necessary. Reservists should not be brought onto active duty in excess of one year, with a 5:1 dwell time, per the instruction. The Marine Corps must ensure procedures are in place to execute this plan with a usable ready force available for call to active duty. The Marine Corps' responsibilities in the activation, mobilization, and demobilization planning process is detailed in enclosure (3) of DODD 1235.10.

## **5. Budget Awareness**

How the screening process is approached hinges on funding. In order to physically muster more individuals, MCIRSA is required to budget for venues, pay active-duty special-work orders for RSP Marines, and reimburse IRR members per diem for attending a muster. Under the new contracting process, a muster venue costs \$30,000, on average. This is an average increase of \$20,000 over using a government-purchase charge card. The current budget pays to muster 10,000 IRR Marines at the mega-musters, and more at regional musters. All decisions made to recreate the screening process must consider the finite budget slated for the IRR component to maintain and operate. In a 2007 Leatherneck article entitled “Keeping Tabs on IRR Marines,” Brigadier General Darrell Moore, chief of Marine Corps Mobilization Command, stated that MOBCOM aimed to increase readiness, communications, and options for IRR Marines.<sup>62</sup> A funding request to perform “virtual” online musters for most IRR Marines would supplement, but

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<sup>62</sup> Kimberly Johnson, “Keeping Tabs on IRR Marines,” *The Leatherneck*, 26 February 2007. <http://www.leatherneck.com/forums/showthread.php?41982-Keeping-tabs-on-IRR-Marines>.

not eliminate, physical musters.<sup>63</sup> If the budget is not granted, the idea of a more effective, optimal system may require a shift in funds to implement. The reduction in costs for large venues, per diem, and staff travel may open up the ability to virtually muster Marines.

## C. RELATED STUDIES

The following studies are relevant to the optimization of the screening process, focusing on the concepts of skill decay, in-depth screening processes, and the benefits of a tiered system. The analysis conducted in these studies, as well as the study that reassessed use of the IRR, is employed in this thesis as a basis for recommendations. The constraints of DOD directives and instructions with regard to the screening process, combined with related studies, provides a starting point for optimizing IRR readiness.

### 1. Screening Methods

A study that examines a newly implemented screening method, placing the best-qualified personnel in recruiting stations according to a system similar to the command screening program (CSP), was conducted by Manuel F. Munoz in 2005.<sup>64</sup> His study “Analysis of the Screening and Selection Process for U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Station Commanding Officers” observes the screening process to determine whether it is more effective than methods used before 1996. The previous method was based on a “gentlemen’s agreement” type recommendation from occupational-specialty monitors to the branch head of officer assignments at HQMC. This process had officers who were scheduled for a change of station simply receiving orders to vacant recruiting stations, resulting in personnel not equipped or qualified for the command position. A proposed change came as a result of failed recruiting goals between 1994 and 1995. As this method was not producing satisfactory results, MCRC and MM division switched to a screening process to determine qualifications. The new process standardized the screening and

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<sup>63</sup> Kimberly Johnson, “Keeping Tabs on IRR Marines,” *The Leatherneck*, 26 February 2007. <http://www.leatherneck.com/forums/showthread.php?41982-Keeping-tabs-on-IRR-Marines>.

<sup>64</sup> Manuel F. Munoz, “Analysis of the Screening and Selection Process for U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Station Commanding Officers” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2005).

selection criteria for those required at the stations. The concern with the goal of this process is pulling top performing officers from the operating forces.

MCRC recruiting goals have been successful since the implementation of the screening method. The high-caliber commanding officers desired for these positions encourage success by leading the Marines through motivation and inspiration, meeting the goals set by MCRC for each Marine Corps recruiting district. Munoz examined before-and-after statistical data on the formal screening process among recruiting stations. Results from the new system increased the value of officers. The selected officers had a higher average time in grade/service, more dispersed demographically and in occupational specialties, more with higher education, and no officers were selected who were twice passed for promotion to lieutenant colonel. Considering these factors proved to increase the overall effectiveness at the recruiting stations.

Although the new screening process is considered successful, Munoz's study is limited to commanding officer samples from 1990–2003. Still, to date, MCRC has been able to effectively screen the necessary officers for the position of RS commanding officer.<sup>65</sup> Munoz considered higher education, race, gender, and primary military occupational specialty with his findings as measurable variables. Immeasurable variables, such as leadership and experience, varied among officers, and this consideration was also built into the process of finding well-rounded officers. Finding those with the motivation and desire to accept critical roles should be considered first when screening the IRR population for required ranks and specialties. The next priority is to screen those who possess the qualities the Marine Corps wants to be measured highly. While screening a population outside the active force may be difficult, the quality of those found increases, just as when top performers fill the commanding officer RS billets.

## **2. Tiered-System Related Study**

Predicting whether a Marine will attrite or not is a difficult task, given immeasurable factors outside of tested variables. Andrew L. Holmes's 2013 master's

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<sup>65</sup> Manuel F. Munoz, "Analysis of the Screening and Selection Process for U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Station Commanding Officers" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2005), 50

thesis, “Analysis of the Marine Corps Educational Tier System” observed methods to improve the tier education system and the educational credentials to screen new Marine Corps enlistees.<sup>66</sup> The primary purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the current three-tier educational system by analyzing first-term attrition trends and probabilities for Marine Corps enlisted personnel. Even a Marine classified as tier I for educational level (at least a high-school diploma) is likely to attrite—though at a lesser percentage than a tier II (GED holder or high-school dropout). The thought process between the education criteria relates to the enlistee demonstrating the ability to complete a commitment where a GED holder or high-school dropout are more likely to quit. Holmes found there are additional factors that may cause an individual to attrite, in which education does not play a role. Observing this tiering system helps recruiters reduce the probability that an applicant will attrite, ultimately saving time and money.

Holmes shows how important screening and tiering new applicants is for MCRC to be successful in finding the finest Marines possible in a fiscally responsible manner. The instruction of finding “youth and vitality” is obsolete, while education, coupled with physical and mental agility, has moved to the forefront of importance. First-term attrition losses in the past decade have cost the Marine Corps tens of millions of dollars in replacing lost recruits. Holmes clearly states that with more effective tools for screening, new applicants could significantly reduce the fiscal waste from first-term attritions. Additionally, the use of incentives has become standard in helping reduce attrition in the absence of a draft. The all-volunteer force gives volunteers opportunities to leave the military that were not available during conscript. This conclusion is affirmed by the extensive study, “Screening for Service: Aptitude and Education Criteria for Military Entry,” which was written by Eitelberg, Laurence, Waters, and Perelman.<sup>67</sup>

The difficulty of attrition lies in its predictability. There is an unknown factor in the likelihood that any individual will stay, given non-cognitive attributes. The Army

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<sup>66</sup> Andrew L. Holmes, “Analysis of the Marine Corps Educational Tier System,” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School.2013), 3

<sup>67</sup> Eitelberg, Mark J., Janice H. Laurence, Brian K. Waters, and Linda S. Perelman, *Screening for Service: Aptitude and Education Criteria for Military Entry* (Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization. 1984).

Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences attempts to identify and optimize this issue in the screening of enlistees.<sup>68</sup> Holmes mentions the importance of this optimization in the whole-person concept and the difficulty of capturing a person's qualitative nature. To have a Marine complete his service contract is financially optimal for the Marine Corps' return on investment. The costs associated with training and educating a Marine are considerable, especially if the four expected years in return are not fulfilled. The data used considered only Marines who did not finish their end of active service, without excluding mortally wounded Marines and those that volunteered to leave early under the volunteer-enlisted early release program (VEERP). In conclusion, the data showed the tiered system was effective in predicting attrition rates by educational level. Tier II Marines were seven percentage points higher than tier I in likelihood to attrite, and tier III were ten percentage points higher than tier I. A properly crafted system can identify variables that give the best results to those that will attrite, versus those who remain. A tiered system helps to identify optimal personnel for recruiting, reenlisting, command boards, and likely availability for future service as part of the IRR component.

### **3. Skill-Decay Studies**

Skill decay has become more problematic with the increase of the service obligation from six to eight years. Once a member is separated from active service, the curtailment of hands-on experience from training begins to yield a degradation of knowledge. A RAND study, coupled with a similar study by the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Studies (ARI), analyzes decays in skills and military knowledge while a member remains a part of the inactive reserves.<sup>69</sup> RAND Note 1986, "Individual Ready Reserve Skill Retention and Refresher Training Options," by Bodilly, Fernandez, Kimbrough and Purnell, details the importance of skill retention and implementing a refresher training program for IRR members to maintain

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<sup>68</sup> Robert A. Wisher, Mark A. Sabol, Hillel K. Sukenik, and Richard P. Kern. Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Call-up: Skill Decay. United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. June 1991

<sup>69</sup> Robert A. Wisher, Mark A. Sabol, Hillel K. Sukenik, and Richard P. Kern. Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Call-up: Skill Decay. United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. June 1991

occupational-specialty readiness.<sup>70</sup> The ARI publication “Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Call-up: Skill Decay” by Robert A. Wisher, Mark A. Sabol, Hillel K. Sukenik, and Richard P. Kern, analyzes soldiers called up during the Gulf War and observed for skill decay since release from active duty. According to the studies, an IRR Marine is likely to lose knowledge in his military specialty rapidly after departing active duty.<sup>71</sup>

RAND questioned whether certain occupational specialties from the IRR could be mobilized, given the lack of training in fields subject to skill decay. They performed a controlled experiment to test skill decay for IRR members in each of the service branches. The study recommends that annual IRR musters be used to determine skill deterioration, refreshing needs, and participation rates. This research was conducted during the implementation of the annual muster process, with the proposal of adding a refresher training program to motivate greater attendance by IRR members. Congress, the Secretary of Defense, and the services were concerned that funds were limited for training aimed at reducing skill decay for mobilization, and that, with the increase in service obligation, a service member would be less prepared for mobilization, from being outside his field longer.

Familiarization training is required to boost readiness levels upon mobilization, as judged necessary. The cost benefit of using pre-trained individuals to fill wartime requirements is better than the alternative of a new recruit or a gapped billet.

RAND conducted controlled experiments and surveys in which members were released from active duty and later assessed during their time in the IRR. The individuals were tracked throughout the process to observe performance. RAND used questionnaires and hands-on tools to identify skill decay.

The RAND research suggests that the level of skill decay found justifies a requirement for refresher training to bring individuals in many critical specialties back to

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<sup>70</sup> Susan Bodilly, Judith Fernandez, Jackie Kimbrough, and Susanna Purnell, *Individual Ready Reserve Skill Retention and Refresher Training Options* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1986).

<sup>71</sup> Robert A. Wisher, Mark A. Sabol, Hillel K. Sukenik, and Richard P. Kern, Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Call-up: Skill Decay, (Alexandria, VA: United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, June 1991).

operational readiness. The study discusses the costs to initiate and proceed with such training and questions whether pulling members from inactive status is valuable. In some cases, programs are already in place wherein an IRR member may piggyback with current training programs of the AC. In other cases, where a program would have to be created, this study considered the associated costs of designing a program, from instructor time and material to base-support costs at centralized locations. Activating IRR members for mobilization comes at a greater cost than just member pay and allowances.

Since most Marines called to orders during their inactive period exceed the six months cited by ARI as the start of a significant loss in skills, familiarization training is essential. Understanding the number of those requiring training ahead of time will help planners to identify the costs and more importantly the timetables involved in activating a member. The level of training necessary and the number of Marines involved will depend on the activation budget approved by the president. The method of training will dictate costs, whether web-based familiarization training or a two-week refresher course on counterpart training. Longer training incurs increased costs in paying the member, covering the incremental costs of the training program, and, most importantly, limiting the time an IRR member is available in operational status.

Another concern from the two studies is the motivation of the IRR member and whether he has the fortitude to show up for refresher training or effectively respond to orders. During the 1986 study, the Marine Corps' voluntary training included less than five percent of its members from the IRR. Although funding could not support training for an acceptable level of IRR members, the program is underutilized. The RAND study discusses potential reasons a member might not respond to voluntary refresher training, including lack of interest, limited opportunities, not receiving appropriate information about the program, or the funding lacks interest to encourage monetarily to participate. In order for the Marine Corps to reduce familiarization training to increase operational time, a higher level of training for IRR members would have to be implemented.

Skill decay over time makes it difficult to bring an inactive Marine back into the fold to operate at full capacity. These studies bring to light the importance of identifying level of decay through surveys in order to allocate the amount of training required once

authorization is given to use the IRR for contingency operations. The muster process was a new concept when RAND conducted its analysis on skill decay. Their findings suggest that the service branches may benefit from implementing skill-based training and surveys into the muster process for increased readiness.

#### **4. Previous Analysis of IRR**

A previous study addressed the purpose and uses of the IRR during the war on terror. In “Reassessing the Individual Ready Reserve’s Role in the Marine Corps Total Force,” Shannon Shinskie examines the difficulties of involuntarily mobilizing 2,500 IRR Marines for combat operations, as authorized by the president of the United States in 2006–2007.<sup>72</sup> The original research objective of this study was to “observe if the IRR’s new strategic plan was a success and if the plan resulted in a higher percentage of readiness.” As a secondary result, Shinskie noted, that no matter what MOBCOM had performed in the past, to “increase readiness by screening, training, and engagement of its members, there was still a struggle to involuntarily mobilize 2,500 IRR Marines.”<sup>73</sup>

This research sought to understand the lack of participation and readiness by Marines with remaining MSOs. Further research outside this study has not been available, as data was not maintained on the 8,000 Marines who received orders. Information on the Marines in receipt of mobilization orders by rank, specialty, and their justification from service or reason for disqualification will give MCIRSA and Reserve Affairs awareness of how to improve the IRR Engagement Strategy (IES). Information on the IES outside this study was not found; however, the current strategy used by MCIRSA mirrors the IES developed in 2006. Shinskie found that the IES made a drastic change in IRR management by improving contacting, screening, and mustering of the IRR population.

To prepare for an involuntary mobilization, planners at MOBCOM sought to increase the readiness of IRR Marines. Screening and sorting efforts were the primary

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<sup>72</sup> Shannon L. Shinskie, “Reassessing the Individual Ready Reserve’s Role in the Marine Corps Total Force,” (Master of Military Studies, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University), 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Shannon L. Shinskie, “Reassessing the Individual Ready Reserve’s Role in the Marine Corps Total Force,” (Master of Military Studies, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, 2008), 2.

focus, seeking to identify issues that would prevent an individual from mobilizing, including lack of contact. The findings of this study, Shinskie conclude that IRR readiness declined steadily throughout the war, as Marines transferring to the IRR were battle-ridden and not as physically and mentally ready to continue service. Shinskie's suggestion is to use the IRR immediately after the start of military operations, using service members who have not "borne the brunt of combat deployments." The IRR Marines are pre-trained and available for a combat role, and if not used, their skills and training are wasted as they drop from the IRR after completion of their service obligation.

The IES Strategy was thought to be doomed from the start, although the return on investment increased the contact rate by 13.6 percent.<sup>74</sup> Through the initiatives of the IES, many Marines had some contact with MOBCOM at some time during the year, and in some cases, multiple times a year. It was also found that IRR Marines attending an annual muster statistically showed a higher tendency to obey orders; if highly correlated, this datum provides a promising readiness level as muster attendance increases.

The involuntary mobilization of 2006 and 2007 was the current-day Marine Corps' ability to demonstrate the readiness of the reserves. Identifying the lessons learned from after-action reports would further assist preparation of the IRR in future contingency-operation requirements. After the move from MOBCOM, much of the critical lessons were lost with how the mobilization materialized. In the case of another involuntary mobilization, MCIRSA will be required to continue instilling systems that will best place them to successfully execute MAID-P.

#### D. SUMMARY

The screening process is a standardized process designed to manage an effective ready reserve. The involuntary-mobilization study concluded that current screening fell short of expectations, forcing MOBCOM to examine the process for increased readiness. MCIRSA is restricted to regulations set by DOD directives, DOD instructions, and Title 10 U.S.C with regard to screening-process mandates. By emulating the positive results of

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<sup>74</sup> Shannon L. Shinskie, "Reassessing the Individual Ready Reserve's Role in the Marine Corps Total Force," (Master of Military Studies, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, 2008), 18-19.

related studies, MCIRSA can build on the current process and remain in compliance with policies from Congress, DOD, and the Marine Corps for increased readiness.

Based on the information in the involuntary-mobilization study, this thesis considers seven items of interest:

- The screening process
- Mustering
- Time limitations
- Member participation
- Skill decay
- A tiered-system
- Budget Constraints

Each of these items is analyzed to produce recommended actions for IRR readiness. MCIRSA must implement a series of systems that meet budgetary constraints for optimal results in identifying IRR Marines for mobilization.

Through the implementation of a four-level tiered system to screen IRR members, MCIRSA manages the pool of ready, top-qualified, and most-desired Marines. Executing the current orders to drive participation among the members will improve as it is enforced. Providing opportunities for Marines to stay informed within their communities will entice Marines to stay active with the IRR through electronic familiarization training and surveys that, in turn, help MCIRSA identify skill decay before the mobilization process. Preparing the Marines for mobilization is the goal of MCIRSA. Using the members as a last resort, not out of convenience to the Marine Corps, is a key desideratum.

The next chapter analyzes each of these seven categories to make recommendations for the IRR screening process.

## **IV. ANALYSIS**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

MCIRSA is committed to improving IRR readiness to vague preparedness levels for mobilization by means of optimizing the screening process. Just as Shinskie's study questions whether increasing IRR Marine participation rates is plausible,<sup>75</sup> this analysis examines alternative options to improve the maintenance of the IRR component. It begins by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the current screening process, and programs to consider in serving the Marine Corps initiative and IRR Marine well-being. The focus of this thesis considers DODI, DODD, and previous studies identified in the literature to improve the efficiency of screening methods, enhance mustering duty, enforce time constraints, restructure the tiering system, enforce participation requirements, and prevent skill decay. The research examines the financial constraints on MCIRSA to accomplish the goals of improving IRR readiness.

### **B. THE SCREENING PROCESS**

Screening is a continuous process that co-exists with the ever-changing IRR manpower requirements. At any time, the IRR population today is approximately 70,000 Marines. During a given year, personnel screened in the earlier months are not necessarily the same Marines available later in the year. MCIRSA separates approximately 1,600 IRR Marines every month as they reach their end of obligated service. Screening early on in a Marine's IRR time helps ensure the individual is available for future service. The current process can be streamlined by screening only those Marines with more than twelve months' obligated service remaining; this expedient would also benefit the RC by stretching a tight budget.

A more proactive screening process would allow MCIRSA to reduce costs on random screening, target the needs of the Marine Corps, and ensure the RC is prepared

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<sup>75</sup>Shannon L. Shinskie, "Reassessing the Individual Ready Reserve's Role in the Marine Corps Total Force," (Master of Military Studies, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, 2008).

for contingencies. Current operations in the screening process include an annual contact of every Marine through a phone conversation or a physical muster conducted by MCIRSA and the IMA assigned to RSP staff. MCIRSA executes mega- and regional musters around the country during the fiscal year to screen Marines and ensure individuals are prepared for mobilization to active service. The categories to consider in optimizing the screening process include setting goals based on anticipated requirements and monitoring past performance by prioritizing between available Marines and excluding the unqualified. IRR Marines choose their location after the Corps based on where they want to live, not on the preferences of a particular reserve unit or military installation. Because they are dispersed, a wide mix of occupational specialties is found in each Marine Corps district.

## **1. Setting Goals**

Screening IRR Marines is difficult, due to geographic separation and the members' inactive status. Although the Marine Corps maintains a substantial IRR structure, screening methods are not currently optimal to meet phase one of the MAID-P. Screening is performed randomly, based on location, with no particular set goals regarding anticipated requirements in case of contingency. Moreover, HQMC does not provide MCIRSA with a list of anticipated shortfalls to screen for during the fiscal year. The process can be better organized and executed to identify what the Corps needs in time of emergency by screening the required Marines according to known shortfalls and who are most likely to participate.

Similar to Munoz's research on the RS commanding-officer screening process, in which MCRC and MM screen to determine the best qualified, MCIRSA and the RSP should screen for anticipated requirements. Once requirements are identified by MP and MM, further requirements to select the best qualified are based on MOS, perceived shortfalls, rank requirements, job experience, civilian professions translatable to the Marine Corps, and leadership experience, as basic criteria.

After identified shortfalls from MM and MP are achieved for the fiscal year, all additional screenings are considered alternates for mobilization and individual well-being

checks. The process shifts from random contacts to screening those members essential for present needs. The MP division's current guidelines are scheduled for publication as a Marine Corps bulletin or Marine administrative message, per Lieutenant Colonel Thomas W. Gagnon and Lieutenant Colonel Hans W. Morris of MP division.<sup>76</sup> By setting goals based on this information, MCIRSA could ensure the right Marines are identified. The RS CO screening process has shown success year after year, due to its having a direction. The same success could benefit the IRR component's overall performance.

## **2. Monitoring Past Performance**

The caliber and capability of a Marine can be measured by performance. Because IRR Marines are inactive, current performance is not known by MCIRSA. Certain categories of previous experience and knowledge would be helpful for MCIRSA to screen for. Munoz's thesis draws attention to officer boards, which screen members based on leadership experience and strong work ethic. A command exit survey is an option to assess a Marine's ability upon separation from active service. As applied to the IRR, a survey would include an overall assessment of the Marine at the end of service from the separating command, and more importantly, would improve the necessary administrative fields that must be posted in MCTFS. Increasing the list of type transaction codes (TTC) that are entered into the unit diary for each Marine would capture valuable information that MCIRSA can rely on when the Marine joins the IRR. MCIRSA requires accurate data from the separation branches. Providing a checklist for the codes required to accurately complete separation would speed up screening later on. The checklist would also reduce the chance of incomplete fields by allowing personnel officers to refer to the command source document. MCIRSA would be able to guide the IPAC separation branches with codes describing the Marine's caliber for future tiering and other uses.

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<sup>76</sup> Lieutenant Colonels Thomas W. Gagnon and Hans W. Morris, discussion with the author, 11 December 2014.

## C. MUSTERING

Changes to the mustering process could help increase the number of IRR Marines screened in a fiscal year, according to observations during this research made at the Atlanta mega-muster, as well as extrapolation from current trends. Along with the outside entities attending, the current muster structure is extremely useful to MCIRSA in tracking and physically screening IRR Marines. MCIRSA typically expects to screen an average of 1,000 IRR Marines per mega-muster, but achieves a 60-percent attendance rate. This unthrifty figure provides a starting point for the better use of annual funds. Savings may be realized by better matching venue sizes with the numbers attending, electronic mustering in alternate years (to include those outside muster areas), and using military installations as a venue when possible. These options have the further advantage of providing greater opportunities to participate.

More-frequent musters also increase opportunities for participation, especially if Marines are authorized to choose their muster. If a valid reason precludes attendance, the Marine will be allowed another chance to be screened at a later date. The RSP Marines would be responsible for hosting mustering personnel over the dates designated by the commanding officer of the RSP. While RSP Marines are calling IRR Marines during their drill periods, others will oversee the physical muster.

### 1. Optimizing the Use of Muster Venues

A large muster site at one of the ten mega-musters costs an average of \$30,000 through the contracting process. This high cost limits the number of mega-musters MCIRSA can hold in a fiscal year. An increase in the number of Marines ordered to muster will make the most out of large venues. If all variables remain the same, issuing orders to 1,700 Marines, based on a 60-percent show rate, will yield upwards of 1,000 per muster. This was the case at the Houston, Texas, mega-muster of 17 January 2015 and the Long Beach, California, mega-muster on 7 February 2015. Houston had 1,125 orders mailed and 670 attending, while Long Beach had 1,879 orders mailed and 1,134 attending. Every muster location has its own trends and fluctuations in the number of orders, which varies from site to site. For areas where the RSP is unable to support a

maximum of 1,000 Marines, smaller venues can be used, and orders mailed could again reflect the 60-percent trend.

Smaller venues are less expensive, and if used multiple times a year, pending the regional RSP's availability, attendance may increase due to an increased convenience. Adding new venues to a region may pick up more of those Marines who would otherwise be geographical outliers. Optimizing the muster venues will not increase the show rate, but it should increase the number of IRR Marines screened in a fiscal year. Those Marines not participating would be eligible for separation if placed in an unsatisfactory-participation status.

## **2. Military Installations**

Marines currently have one opportunity per fiscal year to attend a muster held in their region. By using military installations and SMCR units, MCIRSA could increase the frequency of muster duties. The costs associated with performing a muster at a military venue are presumed to be substantially less than alternative locations. One advantage of using military installations is the availability of administrative and medical staff to assist with MCIRSA screening. Prior-service recruiters, Marine for Life mentors, career planners, VA personnel, and reserve personnel are already located on most military installations.

By authorizing MCIRSA to integrate musters into SMCR units, the personnel and tools available at scheduled drill weekends could be used to fill the administrative and medical shortfalls typically found at a mega-muster. These shortfalls prevent the MCIRSA from fully mustering the Marines in attendance. The SMCR unit, in return, benefits from assisting in the screening by helping to identify the Marines they need for future billets. SMCR commands have co-located prior-service recruiters, career planners, medical staffs, and an administrative section to screen potential reservists. The Marine is given the opportunity to observe a drill process and consider joining an SMCR unit. Approval for this method may be difficult to secure, as not all commands have time available in their annual schedules and commanders may hesitate to provide the support necessary to make the option worth entertaining.

### **3. Electronic Musters**

There is no requirement to muster physically every year, and not all Marines are in a location that allows them to do so during their time in the IRR. Capturing IRR Marine readiness level is important, as they potentially have a critical MOS desired by the Corps or needed to fill a vacancy in the RC. Today, electronic mustering is a realistic option for implementation, and MCIRSA is discussing the possibility. The cost-benefit over time is critical, when IRR Marines normally unreachable can be captured in the MCIRSA's administrative system.

A properly built website, including surveys and questionnaires, in addition to administrative updates to track the Marine, would obviate the costs incurred by physically mustering. Surveys and questionnaires can discover the Marine's desire to continue serving and changes to his medical status. The second part of the electronic muster would test skill performance to monitor skill decay. Any changes or issues of concern requiring attention from MCIRSA staff would be flagged for follow-up communication.

An additional inducement for mustering from home would be to offer payment (less than the amount for mustering physically) to complete the survey, questionnaire, and skills test. The total time to perform all three requirements should be a minimum of two hours, not to exceed four. The Marine would be paid after all required fields of the detailed electronic muster are filled in.

### **4. Muster Education**

This research found multiple discussion sites for Marines asking why they were receiving orders and what they mean. Marines may become alarmed if they are unaware, and moreover uneducated, on the muster process. Peer discussions are often misguided and online responses are often wrong. A Marine receiving orders in the mail from MCIRSA may believe he is being mobilized or screened for mobilization. A common initial response is to stay away, as they do not fall under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. If official information on the IRR and muster requirements is communicated early on, anxiety about attending muster duty may be alleviated. While the purpose of the

muster is to help the Marine Corps identify available personnel, it also provides helpful tools for the transition to civilian life. Outlining what to expect at a muster and its purpose may increase participation by correcting misperceptions and keeping them from spreading.

#### **D. TIME LIMITS**

The timeframe for mobilization of an IRR Marine is limited to twelve months. The dwell time must exceed a 5:1 ratio, where for every month a Marine is mobilized, he receives five months of dwell status.<sup>77</sup> Every day that IRR Marines are used for mobilization, they are to be used to the fullest and for their occupational specialty only. Because a Marine is likely to have been separated from the Marine Corps AC, critical skills are likely to have diminished, unless the Marine is using the skill or has received related training. Identifying levels of skill decay is important when activating an individual who needs familiarization training, because it allows MCIRSA to allocate the time needed for such training and thus to maximize the individual's utility.

A Marine should be made aware of an activation 24 months beforehand, as described in DODD 1235.10; however, as contingency operations are not always predictable, and neither is the need to fill active duty shortfalls, notifications are likely to occur within the 24 month period. To be activated, a Marine must have twelve months' obligated service at the time the activation takes place unless agreed to extend, resulting in a three-year time frame from announcement to completion of orders. As the opportunity to use an IRR Marine is limited, efficient implementation of the screening process is vital.

#### **E. A TIERED SYSTEM**

MCIRSA has implemented a tiered system to identify the best candidates for mobilization. The four-level system is already tracked through the contact and screening database, but is scheduled for input into MCTFS using the platoon code TTC. Under

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<sup>77</sup> Department of Defense. *Activation, Mobilization, and Demobilization of the Ready Reserve*, DOD Directive 1235.10. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 26, 2008.

MCIRSA's new system, ideal candidates are tracked by their tier results from screening, with tier one the most desirable and tier four the least. By using measureable variables described over a four-character TTC, MCIRSA can quickly identify an initial group of qualified Marines within a data pull.

### **1. The Importance of Tiering**

Holmes's (2013) master thesis examines the benefits to MCRC of a tiered system for applicants who are less likely to attrite. Reducing the attrition rate saves the Marine Corps millions of dollars in training and replacing recruits. MCIRSA can reduce costs by screening and tiering into categories, ranking tier one as the highest recommendation, tiers two and three as considered if qualifications are met, and tier four as not considered, due to a bad reenlistment code, medical disqualification, or insufficient obligated service remaining.

Being able to identify those IRR Marines with medical issues will reduce costs. When a Marine is mobilized with a condition, that condition is inherited by the Marine Corps to correct before release from active service. MCIRSA relies heavily on the separating commands to run the appropriate separation and reenlistment codes into MCTFS for initial assessment. Disqualification of all IRR Marines who have not been recommended through the screening process will streamline the MAID-P and reduce time and funds wasted.

### **2. Tier Coding**

MCTFS does not contain a data field for inputting an IRR Marine's status. Encoding this information to draw upon when activating a Marine would be advantageous for MCIRSA. Improving the current tiered system to include more details, including medical preparedness and critical MOS, should be considered. The information could reside in the platoon code, a four-character field in MCTFS, not required for use in the IRR that allows alphanumeric coding. Each of these characters could be used for specific coding to help MCIRSA identify the pool of Marines available.

*a. Character One: Tier Level*

The current tiering levels implemented by MCIRSA would remain the same. Tiers one through four, as described in Chapter II, would rank the Marine's status in the IRR. The tier number related to ranking would then be used as the first character in the platoon code, from tier one, an ideal candidate, to tier four, disqualified.

*b. Character Two: Medical Screening*

The medical section at MCIRSA lacks a system to track whether a Marine has had a medical screening. The use of the platoon code's second character could identify if a medical screening occurred within the fiscal year. Not all Marines undergo a medical screening at a muster, and if not, they must perform an annual medical screening on their own. They are then responsible to update MCIRSA's medical section on results and changes to their health and indicate whether they receive VA benefits. The second character code is proposed as a P, D, or N. The P code represents medically qualified, D is disqualified for mobilization, and N indicates that no screening has been recorded while the member has been attached to the IRR. All communication between the medical section and the Marine must follow Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) guidelines.

*c. Character Three: VA Benefit Percentage*

The third character of the platoon code could be used to provide information about members receiving VA benefits and the percentage paid, supplementing the second character to determine medical readiness. The percentage would be rounded to the nearest ten. For example, a code three would signify a Marine receiving 21–30 percent.

*d. Character Four: Screening Type*

Once MCIRSA implements the different options for screening, the fourth character could annotate the type of screening. Each screening type conveys different levels of accountability. When a Marine is physically mustered, he might be visually screened for readiness and medically screened. If the screening was made through an electronic muster, the Marine will have updated information and will have performed

skills training, but he will still require a physical. The final screening option consists of those IRR Marines who are contacted by RSP staff. All others not contacted would be accounted for through representation of their code. The codes used for screening would be M for those who physically muster, E for electronic mustering, and P for Marines contacted by phone. Marines who were not successfully contacted would receive either an N for no contact, F for failure to update information, T for less than 12 months remaining on contract, and U for unqualified for future service. This character has the capacity to inform MCIRSA of the status of the Marine.

## **F. PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS**

The IPAC separations branch is responsible for inputting TTC codes in UDMIPS upon a Marine's discharge from active service. Individual Marines are then responsible to update and maintain contact with MCIRSA regarding all changes to their status.<sup>78</sup> In some cases, Marines are not properly educated on the importance of these requirements. Other Marines are aware, but understand there are no repercussions for failure to update information or participate. While these requirements are explained on the Internet, and participation is part of their commitment to the Marine Corps in general, IRR Marines must be informed and understand clearly that satisfactory participation and good standing are important, and unsatisfactory participants will be handled per Title 10, U.S.C.

### **1. Maintaining Good Standing**

To maintain satisfactory status, an IRR member must successfully complete active-duty training, muster duty, and annual screening requirements. Missing a muster is not automatically a reason for unsatisfactory participation. By offering alternative ways to muster, MCIRSA can help Marines remain in satisfactory standing. One method to enforce participation is to separate those with bad contact information and failure to appear when called to orders without reason. When a Marine is not reached after contact via phone or issuance of orders, he is labeled in the system as a no-contact, or tier three.

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<sup>78</sup> Department of Defense. *Administration and Management of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and the Inactive National Guard (ING)*, DOD Instruction 1235.13. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, October 18, 2013. 9.

The member then has six months to contact MCIRSA for screening to be returned to satisfactory standing. If in six months the member is still unavailable for screening, a separation package will begin. Adding screening methods besides phone contact and mustering would give options that aid both parties. Electronic screening and familiarization training are two potential methods.

## **2. Unsatisfactory Participation**

Separating Marines into an unsatisfactory standing due to unsatisfactory participation is not enforced, allowing service members to disregard current policy. Enlisted Marines who lack potential for future service should be separated in accordance with DODI 1332.14.<sup>79</sup> All officers who lack future potential should be separated based on the recommendation from a board of their peer in accordance with DODI 1235.13.<sup>80</sup> In February 2007, Brigadier General Moore stated that Marines not honoring their obligated service would face consequences, adding that failure to execute orders and report as directed for a voluntary activation could result in administrative separation, with a discharge under other-than-honorable conditions.<sup>81</sup> This same punishment applies today.<sup>82</sup> Enforcing regulations by separating those not participating may entice IRR Marines to obey their contractual agreement. These separations will reduce the number of service members MCIRSA has to focus on—only those willing to perform remain for screening.

## **3. Administration School Education on the IRR**

A common trend noted by MCIRSA is improper forwarding addresses, with Marines sometimes still indicating residence in a barracks, post separation. The

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<sup>79</sup> Department of Defense. *Enlisted Administrative Separations*, DOD Instruction 1332.14. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, January 27, 2014.

<sup>80</sup> Department of Defense. *Separation of Regular and Reserve Commissioned Officers*, DOD Instruction 1235.13. Washington, DC: Department of Defense (AT&L), November 25, 2013.

<sup>81</sup> Kimberly Johnson, “Keeping Tabs on IRR Marines,” *The Leatherneck*, 26 February 2007. <http://www.leatherneck.com/forums/showthread.php?41982-Keeping-tabs-on-IRR-Marines>.

<sup>82</sup> Department of Defense. *Administration and Management of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and the Inactive National Guard (ING)*, DOD Instruction 1235.13. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, October 18, 2013.

administrators' coding inputs for separating Marines in MCTFS is what MCIRSA relies on when conducting a data search for candidates. Taking the time to correctly transfer a Marine will support MCIRSA in managing the IRR as they fulfill their contractual agreements. The personnel officer of the separation branch is responsible to ensure all entries are correct and run in UDMIPS for follow-on support to MCIRSA.

The IPAC separations branch is best suited for providing internal reserve education for Marines. Given the lack of time permitted at the Personnel Administration School, reserve training is reduced to on-the-job training under the supervision of personnel officers. The separations branch is the last stop before a Marine picks up his DD-214 and separation orders. The better the administrators are able to explain the importance of the IRR process, the more informed are separating Marines on their responsibilities when assigned to the IRR.

Entry-level students at the Personnel Administration School receive little education on the reserve components in the short curriculum offered, and it is not feasible to provide instruction on the IRR. Only a small percentage will work with the reserves, and time does not permit the curriculum to cover reserve administration. Completing a DD-214, along with separation-codes requirements, is currently offered in entry-level courses. Advanced courses offer classes that educate corporals through majors in more in-depth reserve programs. Two active-reserve (AR) instructors teach the reserve curriculum. One is Master Sergeant James Lockridge of the Personnel Administration School. Master Sergeant Lockridge's goal is to educate senior Marines on basic reserve administration to create awareness that they can bring back to the operating force.<sup>83</sup> Because the short curriculum limits the training of the active component as to the nuances of the reserves, active-duty administrators rely on AR and SelRes Marines to process RC issues. The lack of knowledge and training within the RC becomes evident when a Marine is separated from active duty.

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<sup>83</sup> Master Sergeant Lockridge, in discussion with author, 15 January 2015.

#### **4. Career Transition Briefs**

Offering guidance on the obligations, importance, and benefits of the IRR will provide the information that Marines need to complete their responsibilities.<sup>84</sup> As many of the IRR Marines prepare to enter the second half of an eight-year obligation, gaining their interest is critical for this method to be successful. Finding the best mode of communication to explain roles and responsibilities within the IRR could reduce confusion over what is expected while obligated for military service. In Marine Corps bulletin 1700, *Implementation of Mandatory Transition Readiness Participation Requirements*, there is no mention of the IRR. Per enclosure (4), paragraph 4b, the common career-readiness standards direct separating Marines to attend the reserve opportunities and obligations and Marine for Life (M4L) briefs at the transition-readiness seminar.<sup>85</sup> Capturing a Marine's attention before separation is vital not only to the screening process, but the readiness level of the IRR. The initial interaction must resonate with the Marines as they prepare to depart active duty.

#### **5. Consolidating Information**

Another way to educate Marines is through the development of a Marine Corps order specifically for the IRR, to decrease misunderstanding of the component. Outside the MCRAMM, there is no dedicated MCO for the IRR. The IMA program has MCO 1001.62A, which defines the IMA program, specifying the mission and execution. This order provides information about the program, including IMA roles and responsibilities and how to get involved.<sup>86</sup> A similar order for the IRR would explain what Marines can expect during their obligated contract and how to remain active in the IRR. The MCO should cover purpose, mission, focus and expectations. Marines are comfortable with

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<sup>84</sup> Department of Defense) *Administration and Management of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and the Inactive National Guard (ING)*, DOD Instruction 1235.13. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, October 18, 2013.

<sup>85</sup> Department of the Navy, *Implementation of Mandatory Transition Readiness Participation Requirements* (MCBUL 1700) Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 4–2)

<sup>86</sup> Department of the Navy, *Individual Marine Augment (IMA) Program* (MCO 1001.62A), (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2012), 1

reading MCOs and can quickly reference them when they have a question. MCIRSA would be published as the point of contact for administrative support.

## **G. SKILL DECAY**

Skill decay is an important issue when activating a Marine who has been separated from the Marine Corps and is not current in his specialty. The studies referenced in this thesis on the subject of skill decay show a substantial loss of competency within the first six months after separation from active duty, and ten months for weapons handling.<sup>87</sup> The Marine Corps has skills training available for specialties that must maintain qualifications; however, it is completely voluntary through the Reserve Counterpart Training (RCT) program.<sup>88</sup>

Not all Marines are willing to perform such familiarization training when offered. An alternative to residential training with an active-duty counterpart is through distance learning. On-line programs, in conjunction with an electronic muster process, could meet DOD screening requirements. MarineNet is a military site that allows the Marine Corps to implement, track, and update training briefs and skills tests for IRR Marines. The RAND study determined that use of familiarization training during the muster process could reduce skill decay and inject skill training into the muster duty.<sup>89</sup>

Based on RAND and ARI findings on skill decay, a skills test would combat the loss of information and knowledge during inactivity. By implementing the training, MCIRSA could track results and use the data as a basis for any familiarization training required if mobilized. Moreover, the training would create an opportunity for MCIRSA to confer with Marines living outside the 150-mile radius of a muster site. This gap in the screening readiness is not currently remedied.

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<sup>87</sup> Robert A. Wisher, Mark A. Sabol, Hillel K. Sukenik, and Richard P. Kern, *Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Call-up: Skill Decay*. (Alexandria, VA: United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, June 1991)

<sup>88</sup> Department of the Navy, *Reserve Counterpart Training (RCT) Program* (MCO 1510R.39B) (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2010)

<sup>89</sup> Susan Bodilly, Judith Fernandez, Jackie Kimbrough, and Susanna Purnell, *Individual Ready Reserve Skill Retention and Refresher Training Options* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1986).

To supplement this idea, subject-matter experts (SMEs) from the occupational fields could design an MOS-specific test via MarineNet that updates the Marine on new equipment and tests current skill levels. Material developed by the SME regarding updates, coupled with basic information on the MOS, and would enable the Marine to stay current. This method best fits those Marines unavailable or unwilling to physically muster. The program would provide benefit by keeping them engaged, informed and aware of changes in their field.

## H. SUMMARY

MCIRSA screens IRR Marines and provides opportunities at musters to improve their performance in the civilian sector. Boosting the 60-percent show rate and 80-percent contact rate can be achieved through the consistent efforts of MCIRSA and the RSP staff. Regional mega-musters are held one day per fiscal year, and it is difficult for individuals with private lives outside the Marine Corps to attend. Changing to smaller and more frequent musters as funds allow to allow every Marine to attend whichever fits his schedule is one example of change that could benefit all parties.

Brigadier General Moore, chief of Marine Corps Mobilization Command, has stated that MOBCOM aims to increase readiness, communications, and options for IRR Marines.<sup>90</sup> MCIRSA and RSP's combined ability to contact and screen Marines has consistently supported desired goals. This performance can be further improved to ensure the process does not yield a random sample, but satisfies requirements initiated by MM and MP. Setting goals that consider critical MOS shortfalls, needed ranks, and number of personnel are important requirements in improving readiness levels and supporting the AC and RC.

A practical option to increase participation is an electronic muster system. It allows Marines to muster anywhere in the United States, and supports increased participation. Status updates and skills tests could be made available through the

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<sup>90</sup> Kimberly Johnson, "Keeping Tabs on IRR Marines," *The Leatherneck*, 26 February 2007. <http://www.leatherneck.com/forums/showthread.php?41982-Keeping-tabs-on-IRR-Marines>.

electronic muster at a subsidized cost. The electronic muster system has been discussed, but never initiated.

Other methods not currently employed by MCIRSA could improve the screening process and reduce costs. Tiering is anticipated to provide MCIRSA with a data-rich roster of qualified and unqualified Marines. By enforcing the separation of unsatisfactory participants, higher percentages of contact and show rates should result. Implementation of these programs may yield better fund management and encourage Marines to remain prepared and ready while part of the reserve component.

## **V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. SUMMARY**

This thesis analyzes issues surrounding the IRR screening process and ensures inactive Marines identified are qualified for service in the event of contingency operations. Currently, musters have an average participation rate of 60 percent and contact rate of 80 percent. These low participation rates raise concern among Marine Force Reserves and M&RA leadership.

Screening IRR Marines to identify required inventories becomes difficult as a contingency operations progress. The IRR is increasingly manned by combat-experienced Marines who are war-ridden, exhausted, and in some cases, medically unqualified. During the Atlanta mega-muster, the author observed that almost every Marine had at least one deployment during his active service. Ensuring that IRR Marines are available as combat operations continue and as the component fills with Marines who are overburdened from deployment is a growing concern.

MCIRSA has implemented various methods to increase the sixty-percent participation rate at muster duty. Muster duty now includes more than administrative and medical screening; with the assistance of outside entities, IRR Marines receive information on continuing-education programs, VA benefits, civilian job opportunities, counseling, Marine 4 Life mentoring, and continued service in the reserves. These informational programs are the Marine Corps' way of taking care of Marines who provided dedicated and faithful service. However, the muster duty is also the Marine Corps' way of collecting accurate information on those with remaining obligated service. In addition to providing education, MCIRSA began a tiering system to rank qualified and unqualified Marines. Tiering is a proven method for identifying better candidates for a particular purpose or need and can reduce wasted funds spent on recalling Marines who cannot be mobilized.

This thesis summarizes that within the constraints of a tight budget and limited personnel, MCIRSA can support goals set by the MM and MP divisions to develop an

optimal screening process. MCIRSA can continue to increase participation by educating the Marines on their roles and responsibilities, offering additional muster options, and enforcing current policy to achieve optimal attendance. Through an improved process, MCIRSA can screen more Marines during the fiscal year. It is recommended that contact information be updated more efficiently, to increase attendance rates by individuals who obey orders. Separation procedures can be implemented for those Marines with low participation efforts.

## B. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Six general topics are investigated to address the primary research question. Current processes used by MCIRSA include screening methods, muster duty, four-level tiering, and observation of time limitations. Two areas that could further benefit MCIRSA are prevention of skill decay and enforcement of participation among Marines with remaining obligated service. Conclusions and recommendations from this research are as follows.

1. How can the Marine Corps optimize the IRR for program quality and cost effectiveness?

Currently, MCIRSA attempts to be proactive in pursuit of an acceptable screening rate. Muster duty has become more than an administrative requirement as information on the transition to civilian life is made available. Additionally, the tiering system allows MCIRSA to focus on those Marines best qualified for future service and to exclude the unqualified from mustering—thereby reducing costs. All processes created by MCIRSA aim to reduce the mobilization time needed to train and prepare a Marine for deployment. The more efficient MCIRSA can be in screening and mustering, the more time is available to process a Marine through the MAID-P.

MCIRSA is considering programs that, if incorporated into the current screening process, could boost the IRR readiness level while keeping within budget constraints. Additionally, there are no tools to reduce skill decay among IRR Marines. As discussed, a Marine will likely lose knowledge in his occupational specialty over the course of his service in the IRR. MCIRSA does not maintain the subject-matter experts necessary to

provide familiarization training. Coordination with M&RA is needed to address this issue to successfully develop a program to prevent skill decay. In addition to helping prevent skill decay, MCIRSA might consider mandating participation in musters as a means of improving readiness. The current policy allows MCIRSA to discharge unsatisfactory participants. The new goal is to bring them into good standing rather than perform separation procedures.

Critical shortfalls identified by M&RA are the basis of the priority levels for screening. By setting goals for MICRSA to use in issuing criteria to RSP staff, primary funds can be dedicated to contacting and screening the Marines necessary in contingency operations. This method changes the focus from 100-percent screening to meeting the needs of the Marine Corps first. Remaining funds are spent to screen the remaining participants for a secondary goal of 100 percent screened.

Regular, anonymous surveys at physical muster locations and electronic musters would provide MCIRSA with information as to how Marines feel about the IRR, the muster process, and the Corps. A questionnaire following the survey would let MCIRSA know of any updates to the Marine's status and contact information, as required for tiering.

Hoping for 100-percent participation is futile when there are no repercussions for failing to update contact information or ignoring muster duty. By enforcing the regulations already in place, Marines who fail to participate can be released from service with a discharge other than honorable. Every Marine understands he has inactive service to fulfill when released from active duty. Properly training individuals on what is expected of them will set realistic expectations before they are released.

Additional efforts that could improve the management of the IRR screening process include multiple mustering options, strict guidelines, and training opportunities. Providing more muster sites through smaller venues and electronic mustering should capture a greater contact rate. The electronic muster is built to assist the administrative process and provide educational opportunities to battle skill decay. By performing detailed tiering, MCIRSA can identify qualified Marines for targeted goals and exclude

those unnecessary for future service. Moreover, focusing on anticipated requirements would shift the emphasis of primary funding towards meeting Marine Corps needs.

2. Does the current screening process satisfy the anticipated readiness requirements of the Manpower Personnel and Policy and Manpower Management divisions?

The current RSP screening process does not account for the requirements of HQMC, because it is based on random selection, i.e., proximity to a muster site or by alphabetical order on the MCIRSA contact roster. This type of random screening does not identify individuals who can fill critical shortfalls. A list of anticipated shortfalls from HQMC is not available to MCIRSA for use in screening. Additionally, the MP and MM divisions are working together to publish a MARADMIN or MCBUL to provide MCIRSA with a list of screening priorities. It should also be noted that the RSP is an underused asset in the Marine Corps, offering a plethora of resident knowledge. The Marines in the RSP are senior members who understand reserve requirements.

This thesis recommends MCIRSA disseminate the priority list directed by M&RA to the RSP regions to determine screening criteria. Putting more responsibility on RSP commanders, with requirements directed to MCIRSA by M&RA, could result in new directions that moves away from random screening. Once goals for each region are known, staff could focus on ensuring RC readiness and identifying suitable individuals in musters and phone calls. In order to maximize participation to screening for effectiveness, based on priorities.

3. What variables cause IRR Marines to be found qualified or unqualified for continued service?

MCIRSA's tiering system grades those Marines qualified and eligible for service against those who are ineligible. The four-tier system analyzes the Marines based on time remaining in obligated service and outside circumstances that may prevent or inhibit the member from future service. Additional variables that exclude a Marine include sanctuary, extreme hardship, active status, inactive status, theology/divinity school, sole parenthood, bad re-enlistment/separation codes, and criminal activity after active-duty

separation. The priority in mobilization is to recall the more qualified; however, factors that may exclude a Marine would not always disqualify him. Not all variables would exclude a member from qualifying for mobilization; however, he might be placed lower on the priority list.

MCIRSA should establish a more detailed tiering system to grade and annotate according to set qualifications. Implementing this thesis' recommended enhancements could help to identify the Marines necessary for contingency operations. During an activation, if a member is the only individual available for an occupational specialty, he could be recalled from any of the ranked tiers. IRR Marines are not to be recalled to active duty involuntarily for a position outside their occupational field, confirming the importance of screening for MOS and rank shortfall requirements.

#### 4. What target goals will enable MCIRSA to obtain an acceptable readiness level?

MCIRSA staff use the Internet to spread information and identify and screen the Marines in their charge, often through multiple attempts. Successful contacting and screening is possible only when MCTFS data is up to date. When an IRR Marine refuses to participate and does not meet his responsibilities as a Marine, MCIRSA's success is degraded and RC readiness decreases. Refusal to participate is a core problem in achieving yearly goals.

The target of contacting and screening 100 percent of IRR Marines is an ideal focus, though not practically realistic. An average sixty-percent participation rate at a mega-muster is consistently seen. Once a muster is complete, RSP staff contact those who did not attend to complete screening and ascertain the reason for their absence. Marines are given another opportunity to be responsible. Fulfilling their obligation starts with the Marines themselves.

The ultimate goal should be to screen an ample supply of the ranks and occupational specialties required by M&RA. Refocusing M&RA's screening goals would allow MCIRSA to contact the necessary Marines for mobilization through increasing the number of available musters, the ability to electronically muster, better educating the active component prior to release from active duty and enforcing participation are

recommended. Upon implementation of these recommendations, the target goals should assist MCIRSA to contact and screen more IRR members with a priority set for those qualified Marines required by M&RA.

### C. FUTURE RESEARCH

This analysis is limited in scope, and further research can significantly benefit the IRR screening process. The recommendations provided concern secondary effects that are directly related to the screening process. By observing and correcting these secondary effects, the recommendations in this thesis can improve IRR readiness overall.

One of the largest disqualifiers for an IRR Marine is medical. Medical screening is limited at musters due to insufficient medical practitioners. The medical section at a mega-muster can only screen Marines in need of a PHA or PDHRA. The medical section has limited ability offered to accomplish full screenings. This thesis recommends that the medical section be directed to develop a means of screening members for fully qualified status, yielding a more accurate readiness level through an increased ability to screen.

An analysis of the education provided to Marines before separation is recommended to determine how and when an IRR brief should optimally be held. The scope of this thesis did not allow testing Marines with remaining obligated service as to their knowledge of the IRR after a Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) brief (as opposed to a brief during the actual checkout process, prior to receiving orders). Currently, the transfer to the IRR is briefed during TAMP. A follow-up study is recommended to identify the best time and place for a brief on the roles and responsibilities of Marines with obligated service after release from active duty.

Building an Internet tool for information assistance would allow IRR Marines and MCIRSA to communicate in an authoritative forum, thereby reducing confusion and misinformation. The forum could direct IRR Marines to MCIRSA for answers and concerns. Information on the IRR is posted on the Internet; however, as the Marine may become inundated with too much information, it may be better to summarize it on the recommended electronic muster site.

Finally, each service is directed by Congress and the Department of Defense to maintain a reserve ready force. The broad guidelines found in Title 10, U.S.C., DOD instructions and DOD directives give the services an opportunity to screen the inactive manpower pool as best fits their needs. Future research into the methods and programs used by the other services may discover approaches that tie in well with current Marine Corps practices. This research may assist MCIRSA by identifying good possibilities for improving IRR readiness.

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